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VIEW FROM FRONT VERANDA.

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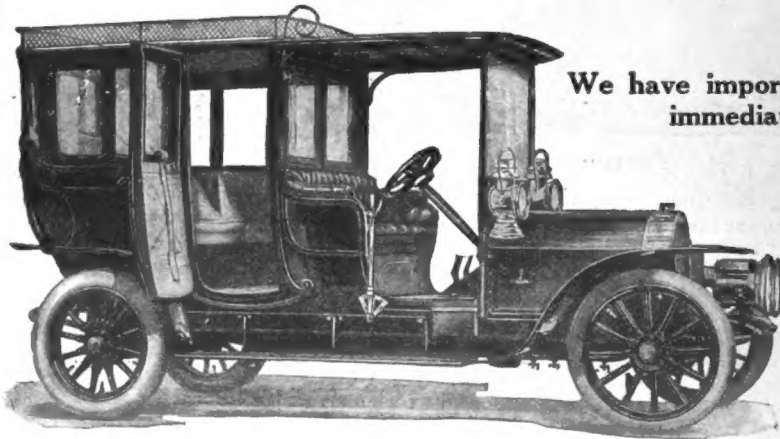
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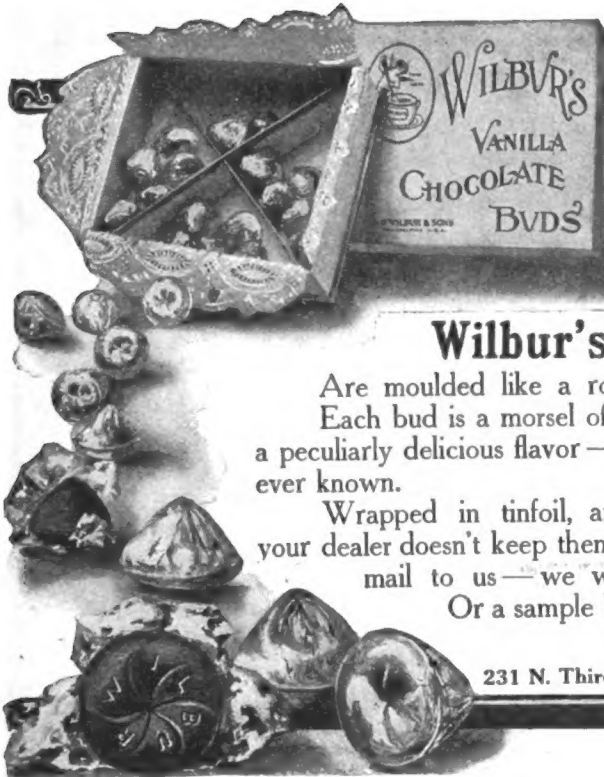
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXI

FEBRUARY, 1907

No. 2

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THE MARCH "SMART SET"

The novel to appear in the next issue is a strong love story, with scenes in New York and Paris. The author has never written a better piece of work, a story more human, more satisfying. It is entitled,

"CREEPING RAILS," By Arthur Stringer

John G. Neihardt is a new author whose fiction and verse will soon give him a high place among contemporary writers. A remarkably original story from his pen will be found in the March number. Other stories will be by Grace MacGowan Cooke, Seumas MacManus, Van Tassel Sutphen, May Harris, Edward Clark Marsh, Katharine Metcalf Roof and Harriet Gaylord.

The essay, a delightful one, will be entitled "On Making Believe," by Arthur Sullivan Hoffman; and poems from Caroline M. Roberts, Aldis Dunbar, Edith M. Thomas, Robert Gilbert Welsh, Charles L. O'Donnell, Emma A. Lente, John Vance Cheney and Harold Susman will appear.

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WINDS OF THE WORLD

By Gertrude Lynch

I

IF the woman in the room had deliberately chosen her background, she could not have found one that enframed her better. Her beauty was, however, of so common a type in the city that it causes little comment. It was of the florid, insistent order that men admire as a matter of course, and women, especially those who study anemia as a fine art, are accustomed to ignore, blind alike to its possibilities and its power.

Her features were fairly regular; her coloring an obvious blonde; the hair was assisted in retaining its original tint by deft peroxide touches; her eyebrows formed a delicate arch where nature and artifice met amicably without a hairbreadth of dissent. Occasionally she permitted herself a touch of rouge, but this was only for rare evenings, as her complexion had none of the haggardness which argues late hours and dietetic dissipations. Her figure was as far removed from the crudeness of the fashion plate as from the portrait painter's directions to nature. It had not reached the danger line of avoirdupois, but suggested a coming regimen, proof of which was found in the continual use of the tape measure in odd moments and determinations in regard to food which were easily forgotten when the force of hunger obtruded its strength.

She was the twentieth-century exponent of a line of women who had performed household tasks, brought numberless children into the world, proudly and easily, and having accomplished this mission had permitted

themselves many an uncorseted moment of ease.

She was a unit, besides, in the steady tide of immigration which pours into New York from all points of the United States with imaginations fired in regard to the El Dorados of wealth and the excitement awaiting them, and which finds instead the realities of hall bedrooms and hand-to-hand struggles to make both ends meet.

In the initial weeks her moods alternated between those of unnatural gaiety and depression. The cañons of skyscrapers, modern Towers of Babel fighting their way upward to dizzy heights, the wonderful, jagged skylines outlined against the gold of the Winter sky when she took her twilight walks, the insolence of the street and car crowds, the shop windows blooming with wonderful creations of the modiste's skill, which seemed to her country-trained eyes almost too gorgeous for use until she turned and saw their counterparts in the ceaseless stream of women bent on pleasure—that something, indefinable, existing in the atmosphere of a great city which gets into and fires the most sluggish blood, roused her to unaccustomed moments of inspiration.

It was in these moods that she experienced a return of the ambitions of her teens which she had lost as so many women like her lose them, after they have passed the first milestone called the church altar. She no longer felt side-tracked, she no longer felt that she had lived her life and must be content with memories and the reflected joys of others. The day seemed all at once to be filled with new aspects,

strange, alluring dreams, tantalizing, distant, but waiting for her grasp.

In her native town her temperamental barometer had marked the Summer heat of the unambitious; here she seemed always at the fever point.

From the new watch tower of her soul she wondered oftentimes how it was possible that she could ever have been content with what she had accepted in lieu of better. She smiled at the hours she had willingly passed away from the maelstrom of excitement where it was possible to lose interest in the fact that one's neighbor has displayed a new gown or that a friend's children have the measles. The letters received from home, which she had eagerly welcomed in the first days of her arrival, soon lost their flavor. The details of monotony no longer appealed. She found it difficult to become enthusiastic over the news that her once intimate companion had decided to cut over her last Winter's cloak, or that the oldest of a family of twelve coughed incessantly at night and the worst was feared. She blamed herself for this strange attitude of mind, for this upheaval of tradition and custom, but was powerless to help it. She had been transplanted in a new soil, and already the elements of change had entered her being.

She realized vaguely, for she was not introspective, that the former existence was saner, safer, more normal; that the new one, while it promised strange pleasures, offered, too, strange regrets and sufferings. She was not content, but she would have been less content to return with her new knowledge and new dissatisfactions. She was like a bird born and reared in a cage, happy till the day when it first tries its wings outside.

These moments of exaltation, of vague desires and longings, had their corresponding times of reaction. She was alone, in the cheaply-furnished room of her lodging-house, a stranger in the city which offers no welcome except to those who can pay for it royally. She had no occupation for her days except what she might pick

up in cheap restaurants where she exchanged commonplaces with the cashier or waitress, in stores where she had little money and where desire and envy assailed her, in watching the crowds on the streets at an occasional *matinée* when extravagance overcame prudence and led her to a gallery seat, in occasional talks with her landlady when the latter permitted an intrusion on her well-filled hours, while her evenings were but a patient waiting for the time when she could draw the sheet over her head and shut out the insistent clamor of the near-by trolley-cars swinging about a curve.

The other lodgers in the house resisted her attempts, made through sheer loneliness, for acquaintance. A curt good morning or good evening when they met on the stairs, a door held open for her to pass, was all. The men were clerks having small salaries and small ambitions to match; the women suspicious of other women who, like themselves, lived alone in lodgings.

Her landlady, Miss Pigott, spent the greater part of her time in a basement room, alone with her dog. The usual result of an intrusion in that sacred precinct was the knowledge that the visitor was unwelcome and had presumed on the privilege of being a factor in the household so unimportant that an absence would not be noted except for the extra trouble of having the room properly cleaned and the interregnum while a new lodger was found.

Once in a while, softened by the receipt of an unexpected payment or an unwonted human instinct, she permitted the invasion of her territory without rebuke by manner or eye. These visits of the lonely woman were made memorable by trivial bits of gossip in regard to the other tenants. She learned that the musician, whom she had mistaken for a virtuoso, played in the gallery of a department-store during luncheon hour; that the fashionably dressed woman in a shaft bedroom was a trained nurse who came once a day to change her attire

and get her mail, and was most acceptable, as she paid regularly and was seldom there; that the three young men, always laughing boisterously, were newspaper reporters with whom Miss Pigott was ever at variance concerning the noise of their typewriters in the midnight hours; that the four—man, wife and two grown children—who lived in the third floor back had quite a social position in a suburban town where they spent their Summers and owned a house which they rented during the Winter; that they made this position good by economizing, surreptitiously cooking their own breakfasts and luncheons. The landlady was at odds with them also, for the extra use of gas.

With these items and others equally important the conversation of Miss Pigott was filled. They permitted innumerable starting points of eloquence and every day added to the weight of trivialities. The household was not only a means of physical but of mental sustenance as well to the starved life of the landlady, who resented the fact of unwelcome men and women on the stairs and in her rooms, insisting in prideful moments that she took them for the sake of companionship, the futile excuse of the housewife who finds in her chosen work neither the opportunity for help to others nor development for herself.

The lonely woman on the second floor added to these scant trifles of information her own simple history, which had nothing in it important enough to hide.

She had married at eighteen a man who, in the country town where they were born and raised, was considered the "catch." He was considerably older than herself and at the death of his father he became the owner and manager of a big store, the usual miniature emporium of a small Western town where everything is to be found, from the red shirt of the miner to the wedding-ring of the bride. She enjoyed a few years of married life, content with the prestige of her position, granted through superiority in dress,

ménage, and the envy of her girl friends who were either left behind in the marital race or had made less advantageous matches.

Then reverses came, the business was sold out, the mortgage on their home foreclosed, and facing her a choice left entirely to her wish to begin all over, her husband a clerk in the store he had owned, and she patronized by those whom she had patronized, or to come to New York where her husband would make his headquarters while he traveled about the country for a commercial house which offered him the position through the favor of a traveler of whom he had bought goods and entertained at his pretty home.

There had been no hesitation. The tears and reproaches with which she had met the news of his failure gave place to ambitious dreams and desires for the excitements of a great city, of which she had heard so much. The salary offered, twenty-five dollars a week, seemed to her inexperience elastic enough for the margin of pleasure which raises life from the cheap bookstore to the counter of the *édition de luxe*. She had no understanding of the financial problems she had elected to solve. The last few weeks of her stay at home were spent in rousing again the sluggish envy of her friends by imaginative accounts of her coming triumphs, a revenge she enjoyed for the change in sentiment her reverses had brought in her small social circle.

The reality was the reality which comes to hundreds of women who leave assured positions, humble though they be, a life of small aims and small regrets, the sheltered existence of the interior town and the inferior equipment of mind and condition, for an open struggle with overpowering circumstances in a big city.

After her voluntary expatriation and the settlement in her new home, the single event of importance was the return of her husband from his business trips. Their enforced separation seemed to bring them nearer together than they had been since the days of their honeymoon, when the absence

for a day was a cause for overpowering loneliness and a corresponding welcome.

They had much to talk about in these reunions—the trivial events of his journey, the acquaintances he had made, the stories he had heard, the success or failure of his sales, a description of the hotels where he had stayed, the quality of the food, the convenience of the rooms, the temperature of the cars and the bright lines spoken over the footlights of some cheap vaudeville theatre, the only recreation he permitted himself.

Three-quarters of his salary was sent each week to his wife, his expenses were paid by the firm and with the remainder he managed to save enough to make his home-coming emphasized by some special glorification in the shape of theatre tickets, or a dinner at some place less flagrantly cheap in service and food than those they usually frequented.

William Hayes was a plain man, plain in intellect, plain in purpose and result. He had had the schooling of a village institute, where he had managed to elude, by plodding industry, the bench of the dunce, while the seats of the mighty eluded him. When he gave up his books at the age of fourteen to enter his father's store he showed the same untiring perseverance. Until the reverses brought about through the dishonesty of others and unforeseen circumstances, he was looked upon by his fellow-townpeople as a model of business acumen and faculty.

His honesty was as plain as his face. It never occurred to him that he could profit by loss. He paid his creditors all he had and made over to them for the balance some property he had given his wife at their marriage. That he was left stranded seemed to him the natural penalty of failure, and he accepted it without complaint. His regrets were for his wife, not for himself.

He had whipped little Betty Freeman's insulters at an early age and, later, escorted her to the usual merry-makings of the young people. She accepted these attentions as a matter

of course, as later she accepted his offer of marriage. She liked his generosity and his patient submission to her whims. She liked his adoration of her beauty, and above all the knowledge that he was considered the most eligible man of the town and that if she failed to take advantage of the opportunity, there were half-a-dozen ready to profit by her foolishness. His plainness and quiet demeanor, surrounded as they were by the halo of mediocre success, seemed the obvious qualities of a man destined to become in time the leading citizen of his native place. Lightness of demeanor, gaiety of talk and too great an attention to dress were, on the part of the men in that community, synonymous with financial flaws.

Her home life had always demanded a succession of domestic sacrifices, which helped to force her to an early marriage. If she did not love as some women love, they were both unconscious of the fact. Passion and eighteen are rarely companions; habit took the place of sentimentality and affection naturally followed the days of courtship.

William Hayes believed his wife the most beautiful woman in the world. He lived and would die in that belief. He compared every other woman with her to the other woman's disadvantage. Even in New York, with its crowds of cosmopolitan beauties and varied types, he was only aware of their inferiority.

Temperament is a chaperon to a woman, as it is a guardian to a man. Some will find and succumb to temptation in a desert; others will not know of its existence in the most corrupt cities of the world.

William Hayes was in the latter class. Business trips, to many men offering opportunities for the secret outlets to vicious propensities, to him were interminable separations from the only place and person with whom he cared to spend his time.

He had been generous in the days of his prosperity and seldom came to her without the material evidence of

his love—a flower, a book, a picture, something to beautify her home or self. His greatest regret in his changed circumstances was that he had so little to offer besides his devotion. It was this regret which prompted him to smoke the cheapest cigars, to give up joining his fellow-travelers in their chosen amusements of music-halls and beer-gardens, so that he might save enough money out of his allowance to take to her.

It was this regret which prompted him one evening to an unwonted speculation. He had followed a couple of traveling men into the billiard-room of the hotel where a match game was going on. One of these men had commenced life as a billiard marker and the finer points of the game and the limitations of the players he noted with ease. He had taken a temporary fancy to the quiet Hayes, as he had, in the same intuitive manner, relegated to the class of second-rates the third person in the group, who bet loudly on the most muscular cue and offered odds. He himself scorned to wager with a man he despised, but gave Hayes the wink. It was seldom that the latter took chances on anything, but the influence of a stein of beer was accountable, and he followed the tip. If he should go home he would be richer by nearly a half-week's salary; if he lost—well, he'd own up like a man, though he hated to think of Betty's disappointment, she enjoyed their little outings so much.

Fortune favored him and he left the smoke-tainted atmosphere with a lightened heart and feet that scarcely touched the ground.

He had determined, in the moments of doubt while he watched the game, that he would spend the entire sum in a reckless merrymaking. He remembered that one evening, when they had been taking an after-dinner stroll, she had expressed a wish to dine at one of the big hotels where automobiles and cabs discharged a fashionable freight every hour of the day and night.

Well, she could go now. He would take her there—to the Waldorf-Astoria

to dine. They would mingle for a time with the world of society, with the millionaires they read about in the daily papers, the wealthy clubmen who spent money like water, and the gorgeously attired beauties of the four hundred. She was a keen observer of trifles, and his own observation, trained by constant shifting of the daily scenes which were his only distraction, matched hers. They would have much to talk about afterward.

His dress suit had not been worn since they came from home, and he was surprised when he came to put it on that he had slightly increased in girth, and in consequence suffered considerable discomfort. His wife, absorbed in the prospect of her debut into the real world, that centre of diplomatic intrigue and social scandals, took from tissue-paper and scent satchets the gown she had kept in reserve for an unusual occasion, which had been renovated since her arrival and forgot his existence for the time, an opportunity which he took to accustom himself anew to his clothes. When he answered her interrogation concerning her appearance he had partially regained his ease and was loud in praise of the gown she had touched up so daintily, as he would have been if she turned to him in a three-year-old suit, garnished hastily at a moment's notice.

When she had put the finishing touches to her toilette she was beautiful in an opulent, striking way that made her husband breathless with admiration and caused her own looks to radiate with satisfaction as she swung back and forth and looked at herself in the mirror which topped the stained-pine dresser in the shabby room. She was like one of those fabrics advertised largely in department-stores to take the place of more expensive, more durable and better woven goods, whose value depends not on intrinsic worth but on the ability to deceive the observer into the belief that they are finer than they really are.

There is nothing that gives a woman such poise as the knowledge that, from

hem to humming-bird, she is without weak points for feminine eyes to criticize, just as there is nothing that gives a man, who is assuming a position beyond his means, such a temporary hold on the situation as the fact that the woman with him is so handsome that he himself escapes notice.

As they went through the swinging-door and made their way along the corridor, more than one masculine head, blasé in the matter of female loveliness, watched their advent with interest. Betty's husband felt his heart warm at the sensation she created. The exaggeration of look and manner visible on all sides seemed to them both the acme of good breeding, the *sang-froid* that marked this class of enviable great. He followed her at a respectful distance, fearful of stepping on her train and irritating her by his awkwardness.

She held her head high; her color came in gusts; her feet seemed hardly to touch the ground. She felt that somewhere in her ancestry there must have been a queen, a woman to whom men and women did homage. She had read in novels how these traits came out in recurrent lives of incarnation. She was sure that it was true. She felt for the first time in her life at home, in her proper sphere.

How hard it would be to go back to the lodging-house after all this splendor! How hard to refit herself into the crabbed environment, when she had expanded in the royalty of her right!

When they reached the palm garden she was breathless with astonishment. She had expected something beautiful—but this! Her eyes took in quickly the details of flowers, palms and music. Her head became a little dizzy at the number of strange faces, at the jewels which caught and reflected the light from millions of tiny facets, at the glimmer of glass and gurgle of wine, at the hum of conversation, punctuated by light laughter.

She watched, half-fascinated, the beckoning fingers of a waiter, and it was not until her husband touched her arm significantly and muttered,

"Come," that she realized her awkwardness.

She managed, in some inexplicable way, to slip between groups, to avoid stumbling over trains and feet, to take the chair held for her by the waiter, who removed her lace scarf and placed a menu before her as he turned away.

She was relieved at the respite from his calculating observation. She felt more embarrassed by it than by the indifferent eyes of the diners near her whose glances touched her lightly, then caromed away to others and the intimacy of whose conversation, jests and significant laughter reached her as from a different world.

Oh, if she but belonged to that world instead of her own!

She was aroused by the painstaking efforts of her husband, who was trying to add up *hors d'œuvres* and *entrées* into a sum total which would not exceed the amount he had planned for their evening.

Her eye wandered from him and his furrowed brow to the waiter who had returned and manifested in the restlessness of his attitude the quick summing up of his class who know when a man is not worth their august attention. Already his hawk glance was on another patron whose plethoric appearance, diamond studs and fat red face seemed to promise a larger order and corresponding tip.

They ate their dinner slowly, lingeringly. It was not often that such culinary perfection came their way. The ten dollars went much farther than they had anticipated. A small bottle of wine was added to the order, and the waiter received a preliminary tip which astonished him.

"Why, it's not near as dear as I expected!" exclaimed her husband. "They don't charge a bit more than they do at the So-and-So," naming a garish resort in a Western city, the pride of the commercial traveler.

He had tucked his napkin into the space between collar and throat, removing the pat of unsalted butter from the individual plate to the side of his

dinner plate so that he could reach it easily.

His remarks floated over her head. She was busy looking beyond, catching stray glances of admiration that came her way from men ever ready to note the voluptuous type of femininity in public places and to express this admiration in a manner that has come to be known as Parisian, but has in reality no special locale.

This was life, the life she had dreamed of. There are those who claim that anticipation far outrivals reality. It was not true. No presentiment could have painted this picture!

She unbuttoned her gloves slowly. Her face was still flushed with the wine, and the walk home in the night air had not cooled it. She glanced about the four badly papered walls, where butterflies huge as camels rioted aimlessly. How more than shabby, how grotesque the place really was!

She looked at her husband, who had quickly divested himself of the unwelcome tightness of his little-used evening dress, and in bath-robe and slippers was lighting a clay pipe, which he puffed with sighs of satisfaction loudly insistent. She recalled the elegance of a slight, manly figure who had sat near her in the palm garden and whose eyes had met her own once or twice understandingly. She wondered if he was a titled foreigner. He was certainly unlike any man she had ever seen before.

How coarse and unattractive everything seemed! Her husband had sunk asleep, his head on his chest and his mouth open.

Every time he came home she noticed an added pound of flesh and a new complacency in his expression. He no longer seemed ambitious. It was a long time since she had heard him talk of an increase in salary. Was this lodging-room, after all her dreams, the end of everything?

How graceful, how much at home, the women were who walked up and down the corridor of the Waldorf-

Astoria! If she were only like them! Why had Fate not given her a proper frame for her beauty?

She kicked her shoe across the room and the noise awoke her husband. He rose sleepily, yawned and, as he stumbled over toward her on his way to the mantel to replace his pipe, said, pinching her cheeks:

"You ain't kissed me tonight."

She submitted to his caress.

II

HER husband had been gone now three days, and life had settled into its routine of monotonous hours. She economized by cooking all her meals in her room and spending the money saved in materials for making over her gowns in the newest styles, slight changes of cut and finish which from last year's wardrobe produced up-to-date creations at which her husband would open his eyes in astonishment, thanking heaven for her prudence and skill and at which the landlady cast critical glances of depreciation. She had only those two to dress for and no place in which to wear the gowns after they were finished, but she had never been an idle woman even in the days of her prosperity, and the habit of slothfulness which comes to many of her sex when the prod of necessity is removed had not as yet overcome her. The landlady had fallen into one of her periodic fits of surliness, and even the new toilettes ostentatiously worn or displayed on chairs and bed failed to evoke a glance. Someone had escaped without paying for his room, and with a vacant bed to fill there was no courtesy in her greetings. She was the type of woman who can be civil only when everything is prosperous.

There was absolutely no one for her to talk to. She had made hundreds of excuses for hanging her hat and cloak in a wardrobe in the upper hall where she was allowed some space, in order to be standing there when the musician came up to his room, but to no purpose. She had once

obligingly lighted the gas for the trained nurse whose arms were filled with bundles. A curt "Thank you" had ended the tête-à-tête. No one in the big city cared whether she lived or died.

The unutterable loneliness of it all filled her one evening with a sudden homesickness, and she put her head on the cushion of the chair and, huddled up on the floor, wept and wept and wept.

The capacity for tears as well as laughter is limited. One cannot go on weeping indefinitely, even though the cause remains. Exhausted at length she arose and mechanically dried her face with a soft cloth. She had the true instinct of the pretty woman who realizes that emotion is disfiguring and loses no time in effacing its mark.

She looked at the clock. Surely it must be nine. At that hour she was accustomed to get ready for bed, to brush her hair, massage her skin, soften her hands with cream and glove them with fingerless covers for the night. That process helped her to kill another thirty minutes, and it was this ability to fill her time with trifles that made her existence, except in moments of self-abandonment, quite livable. But in the lonely evenings even the presentiments of possible excitements in this big, unknown city failed to charm, and she often determined to regain her former peace by a return to forgotten scenes. The next morning she invariably retracted these decisions.

It was only eight o'clock—an hour before she could start her preparations for bed. If she retired earlier than usual she would only have to endure the horrors of the morning when nature, weakened by long hours of sleep, depresses and fights returning consciousness.

It was better to sit up at night than to endure the gray dawn, presaging another day of loneliness, hours filled with the certainty of the known.

Eight o'clock! An interminable time to wait. There was a popular

magazine on the table, flanked on one side by a pink-covered novel which she had bought for tencents and thrown down in loathing at its coarseness, on the other by a yellow journal which had interested a few moments with its exaggerated sensations. She tried each again in turn.

Eight o'clock! Her thoughts wandered along the same road they had taken many times of late, always ending in one place—the Waldorf-Astoria, where she had spent a memorable evening. She thought again of the beauties of the palm room, of the music, the perfumes, the frou-frou of fashionable draperies, the atmosphere of gaiety. A sudden wild idea flashed into her brain. She did not dare. Dare? Who would know—or care?

She was hypnotized by the obsession in her mind. She recalled distinctly that she had seen many women sitting about in the corridors and Turkish room, possibly waiting for escorts, certainly alone. In that crowd who would know if she were not also waiting for someone—a husband, brother, sweetheart detained inopportunely? At the worst, if she were interrogated, she could announce that her escort was in the café. How could the falsehood be proved? Thought environed every possible embarrassment with a ready excuse.

She took out of her wardrobe the dress she had worn the night she dined there. Always carefully coiffured, it took but a moment to rearrange a few loose tendrils of hair. The gown was slipped on deftly, a chiffon hat newly fashioned by a week's sacrifice of desserts pinned on the fluffy curls. The cheeks were a little pale and she touched them lightly with a rabbit's foot whose fur was deeply carmined for instant use.

She was all ready. She took a long, last look at herself in the mirror before she put on the black coat which enveloped her from head to foot. She tied a veil carefully over her hair. She displayed a letter for the mail in her hand so that if she should meet the

landlady on her way she would have an ostensible reason for her outing; then, turning down the gas, she locked the door and ran hurriedly down the stairs, as if she were planning some disgraceful rendezvous instead of the harmless adventure she had designed as a relief from her ennui. To her provincial mind she was taking tremendous risks with her reputation and safety.

She trod the streets lightly, her feet scarcely touching the pavement. Once she had delayed her dinner in a near-by restaurant until it was dark, and twice she had gone out after sunset to post letters; this was the first time she had really been alone in the city at night.

She turned into Broadway and the brightly lighted boulevard of Fifth avenue. The hurrying crowds busy with their own interests soon destroyed her fears. It was like being out in the daytime. There were no shadows to make the heart palpitate with dread, no lurking gallants ready for the insults which she had been told at provincial firesides awaited defenseless women in the streets of New York. Everything was commonplace except in appearance, for the electric lights made a dream-city, and the cool air and the unwonted excitement made her more than ever keenly alive to its attraction.

Her walk was devoid of incident. When she reached the whirling entrance of the Waldorf-Astoria she stopped a moment, unloosened the veil from her hat and opened her coat so that the lace of her gown was distinctly visible, and gave her hair, gloves and skirts little twitches into place. The tint of rouge on her face was heightened by the wave of natural color which met the nonchalant gaze of the attendant, who swung the door and looked at her with the same stare that he presented to the hundreds of women who every day entered the hotel for rendezvous, to meet friends of their own sex or perhaps to feast their eyes on the magnificence of others who, in turn, were looking for like sensations.

She turned to the right and went

into the Turkish room. The window-seats were filled with couples busy with after-dinner flirtations. On the divan a man with curled mustache, ringleted hair and a coat that fitted closely to his figure and then flared like a woman's petticoat, was gazing beseechingly into the roving eyes of an elaborately gowned companion who was keeping up a brisk conversation with him and a brisker coquetry over his shoulder with a stranger. At the desks were women sending notes, unimportant in the matter they contained, but designed to impress with the name of the fashionable hotel either out-of-town friends or penurious lovers. The room was softly lighted; in the asphalt pavement wet with humidity were rosy reflections of the shaded lamps, and in the air an atmospheric necklace crossed from side to side. Sitters in the deep windows called each others' attention to the mirage.

She glided in and sank into the nearest chair. For a few minutes she was frightfully embarrassed and dared not raise her eyes. After a while, when she realized that she was unnoticed, her composure returned. She caught scraps of conversation; she noted trivialities of toilettes; she became interested in the relations of men and women, trying to tell whether they were lovers, friends, or men and wives. She was still too unversed in the way of the world to be surprised at marital devotion, and her own experience furnishing a precedent, it did not occur to her that the coquetry of a woman to a man in a public place precluded the possibility of such an established connection.

An hour passed. She had forgotten the time. She wanted to go and sit in the corridor, but self-consciousness restrained her. One by one the couples and groups strolled away to be replaced with others by whom she was in turn looked at carelessly and then ignored; if any gave a thought to her desolate condition, it was but a transient one, forgotten as soon as created.

She determined to go away and,

another night when she felt braver, continue her quiet investigations of the lives of those nearer the happiness she so madly craved.

But at the moment of her decision two young girls without hats sauntered by. They were apparently patrons of the hotel, or so she gleaned from the nonchalant ease with which they expressed the belief that a residence there was the only cachet to merit.

They started for the corridor and she followed in their wake. She seated herself near them in the cavernous depths of a leather chair. Her unconscious chaperons continued a half-slangy, half-caustic chat, varied with provocative glances at the men who sauntered by, meeting the responses when they became dangerously warm with cold stares of disgust as if the saunterers had taken the expression of fleeting thought for personal invitation.

She watched this by-play and her heart beat rapidly. It was even more exciting than on the evening she had dined there. She was glad of the fact that she had slipped her fan into her pocket, for its use gave her something to do and relieved her from the necessity of meeting curious eyes. The night she had been there with her husband she had delicately encouraged these glances of admiration, flagrant with wine and suggestive of mutual understanding. It fed her vanity and she was protected from harm. She had the ethical scruples of a woman of her class, bounded by fears as well as by standards of right and wrong: She would have liked an adventure, but did not dare face its consequences.

People changed place with the rapidity of a street procession. No one glanced at her except now and then a man who soon became tired of her avoidance and sought easier prey. Through the open doors strains of music mingled with the rustle of passing gowns, the hum of conversation, low-toned laughter. She thought of the shabby room in the lodging-house and shivered as if with cold. The con-

trast seemed even more painful than when she had shared her experience with her husband, and familiarity, instead of breeding contempt for her surroundings, bred instead new dissatisfaction and revolts and newer causes for envy.

Upstairs, in one of the most luxurious suites of rooms in the hotel, a suite originally decorated for royalty, a pretty, delicate-featured, frail-bodied woman was speaking querulously to her maid.

"There is a spot on the ruffle, Clarisse. How can you be so careless!"

She sank into a chair and pushed forward a small, slender foot, clad in a silk open-work stocking and a Louis Quinze slipper.

The chiffon ruffle of the drop-skirt was lifted and softly brushed by the attentive maid.

The woman rose languidly, turned herself about before the cheval glass and noted a wrinkle on the hips.

The maid adjusted it gently, and finding no further cause for complaint she confided in a pathetic voice:

"I do wish Mr. Worth would not send me any more clothes and jewels. I don't know how many jewels I have in the safe, and as for gowns, the wardrobes are choked with them. I haven't any place to wear them except in this hotel, and who cares what I have on? I might put on the same frock every night for a month, and I'll wager nobody would be the wiser. You can have the blue gown, Clarisse—the one I took off. I'm tired of it."

The blue gown had been worn twice, was an imported creation, what modistes term "a dream," and its value paralleled a thousand-dollar bill.

The maid murmured the conventional thanks with which she was accustomed to receive these gifts so flagrantly beyond her station. She had a Frenchwoman's perspicacity, however, and a method of turning them into cash. She never irritated her mistress by appearing in them, and the latter was too careless of their destination to inquire what became of them after her

eyes were relieved of their tiresome sameness.

Edith Worth was the wife of a multi-millionaire. In certain financial circles, particularly in the West where his huge mining interests lay, he was spoken of with bated breath as a man who had the touch of Midas. He was the slave of many enterprises. He was here, there, everywhere, except in the one environment where it would seem that duty and inclination might lead. He had a creed, the outcome of early poverty, that he must attend to the thousand details himself and not trust to subordinate brains his many ventures. It was a mistake that cost him illimitable time and vitality.

Fortune favoring usually only the brave, occasionally extends her hand to the meanest suppliant. No one who had seen Frederick Worth delving as a clerk in a Western town (so small that it is omitted on ambitious maps) could have imagined him in the position he achieved in a decade.

He had followed a line of mining enthusiasts who cut through Nature's impasse with the weapons of inspiration and hope. He was one of the first to come out of the experiences of the Klondike with a fortune so easily gained that he was afraid to tell those working by his side his own good luck, for fear of their discouragement.

He had taken his fortune at the flood. Investing his capital in other mines, and these other fortunes in many outside enterprises, his wealth soon resembled a snowball which becomes larger by absorbing everything in its path. As a clerk, his mental powers were represented by a cipher, but to him, as to many men, latent powers were developed by success. He surprised himself by his abilities as a financier. Before long, everything in life became subservient to the joy of seeing his capital accumulate, feeling himself a power, dreaming of future successes beside which his present record would pale into insignificance. The microbe of accumulation, the parasite of millionaires, fastened itself into his system.

In the early days his wife had followed his fortunes, lived in mining towns, endured many privations. But with increasing demands he found her exactions and occasional invalidism too exhausting, and he brought her to New York and established her in the most luxurious environment he could find, promising her that the change would be a temporary one and that meanwhile his visits would be frequent.

The vastness of the city and its powers of isolation frightened her. She refused to live in a house or apartment. They finally compromised with the situation and nothing that money could do was left undone to provide for her comfort in the royal suite of apartments in the world-famous hotel where he chose her temporary shelter.

Always delicate, in her girlhood days she had withdrawn from the amusements of her age to isolate herself in the retirement of a simple household, which, if it offered few opportunities, yet prevented the acquisition of many provincialisms. An anemic physique often gives a woman an appearance of refinement to which her birth and breeding may not entitle her. This refinement was hers. She fitted herself into her new sphere more gracefully than a woman with greater strength of fiber might have done, and left fewer loopholes of criticism.

She was left with a French maid as her companion to fill up her days as best she could. She made one or two unfortunate acquaintances with the vampires that haunt hotels, and these mistakes prevented her from future experiences of a like character.

She had wealth and the material things that it can buy. In her heart she was never tired of reiterating the truth that she would barter its cheap gifts gladly for the companionship of the one person whose separation from her was like a sword daily piercing her heart anew.

Her husband's hurried notes, the occasional letters or telegrams which notified her of his change of residence, the expensive presents which he sent to make amends for his continued ab-

sences, were the only evidences of her married state, except the plain circlet on her hand and the right to use the title to her name. Once or twice, driven by the demon of weariness, she had traveled to meet him to find him harassed by new projects and her presence a deterrent force. These half-hearted receptions, the weariness of the trips and the reactions of her returns, finally took from her any ambition to repeat them. She left him free even of her complaints, and accepted the situation quietly as one of the many sacrifices of life. Fortunately she was inured to resignation by her early experience.

She glanced at the jeweled watch, the size of a walnut, on her corsage.

"I am going downstairs, Clarisse, to listen to the music in the corridor. Come for me in a little while."

She left the room unattended and took the elevator to the corridor floor. She often spent her evenings in this manner in a quiet corner, watching the crowds, listening to the music, until her early bedtime came.

She was not one to attract casual attention, gowned expensively though she was. No man ogled her, no woman sought her acquaintance. There was a delicate reserve about her that seemed, without any effort on her part, to protect her from the officious and the adventurous.

This evening the corridor seemed unusually crowded. There was no seat near the elevator from which she usually made a quick retreat from possible curiosity, and she walked along, looking a little timidly from side to side, seeking place.

Her rich gown of lace and silk trailed after her in soft, snowy ripples, like the foam of just-breaking waves. Over her shoulders she had thrown a fluffy boa of marabout; her small hands sparkled with rings and about her neck hung a pendant of rubies on a slender thread of gold. Her hair was coiffured in the prevailing mode, and the delicate features of her small face were accentuated by the touch of rouge which Clarisse, an artist in her profes-

sion, had deftly applied. She was so perfectly gowned that she was almost inconspicuous.

The eyes of the two women met and held each other—those of the millionaire's wife and those of the commercial traveler's.

"Betty!"

"Edith!"

In the syllables both women expressed the depth of their separate loneliness.

Only the consciousness of their surroundings and their own *gaucherie* prevented their throwing their arms about each other.

They stood for a moment with hands clasped, and then a man, occupying the adjoining chair to Betty's, rose and courteously made way.

They sat down, still hand in hand, and for an hour talked rapidly of everything, all the details of their lives since their separation years ago, when Frederick Worth had started to make his fortune and taken his wife with him into the farther West, from which communication had soon ceased. In the old days, the days of their girlhood and later of their marriage, Betty Hayes, the wife of the leading merchant, had befriended the clerk's wife in many ways, dragging her from her retreat into gaieties, patronizing her, companioning with her, liking her as the strong likes the weak, as the vain woman likes the woman who is never a rival but always a listener and admirer.

There had been a time when Betty's smart little home, her pretty gowns, her general air of prosperous satisfaction seemed to Edith the pinnacle of worldly success. Betty, herself, had represented the embodiment of all the qualities which are fated to power and wealth. She had not heard of her husband's failure and expressed her sympathy in a lingering touch of the fingers.

If envy took quick root in the soul of Betty she did not show it. To learn that the girl, so easily forgotten, whom in her days of remembrance she had always believed her inferior mentally and physically, had so far outstripped

her in the game of life that there was no possible comparison, was necessarily a surprise. She took in with her practised manner of observation every item of her costume—the costly gown, the jewels, the coiffured hair, the massaging and manicuring that spoke of a maid's incessant care, and compared them with her own raw attempts at fashion.

Necessarily there was a knowledge in both minds of the difference in their circumstances, but neither envy nor patronage unlocked with ready fingers the bond of loneliness which had brought and would keep them together.

When Edith put herself in her maid's hands that night she looked with renewed interest at the reflection of her face and figure, recalling the hearty terms of Betty's outspoken praise. She went over their conversation concerning the early days of their friendship, thought of the little rooms in the ugly frame house whose upper floor was tenanted by another family, where she did her own work, and an afternoon with Betty was her only pleasure outside of her husband's society. How far away they seemed and yet how near—now that Betty had formed the link between now and then.

She sighed with satisfaction. At last there was someone with whom to fill the empty days, a companion for her outings, someone to talk with, about—him; to sympathize, perhaps, when she did not complain except by the depression she could not overcome.

Betty sat in the coupé ordered for her, eyes and lips burning with excitement.

There were to be no more sordid, lonely hours in the cheaply furnished room of a lodging-house, no more dread of the morning and evening, no more gallery seats at the theatres, and unappetizing dinners at third-rate eating-houses, no more anxious waitings for her sole recreation—her husband's return.

Her self-respect, so long at a low ebb, revived. She was at length of account, a somebody, no longer a speck of dust

in a mass of atoms flung back and forth by the resistless winds of the world.

III

She had crept out of the house shamefacedly; she came back triumphant. She hoped that she would meet her landlady in the hall, see the thin, spinster lips pressed together in a line of disapproval and the cold blue eyes searching her face for a sign of shame.

She would not tell her at first. She would force her to await her own good time. Of course she would not be pleased, for it is the rare woman who is pleased at another's good fortune, but she would be curious, resentful, disbelieving, and that is much to exact from an enemy.

But the house was quiet when she came in, except for the musician who, hearing her footsteps behind him, sped along fearful of an encounter. She curved her lips scornfully. She did not need the chance word of greeting now, and perhaps he might be sorry for his incivility; she hoped so. How she would delight in showing off, as the school children say, to this household who had snubbed her, met her timid advances with cold stares of disapproval. It was her turn now.

She did not wait to take the usual evening exercises, to scrub her face and massage it with cream, to glove her hands and brush her hair before the mirror. She wanted the bed and the dark where she could dream and plan and make amends for the long hours of depression she had spent before sleep had calmed her inquiet spirit.

She fell asleep with a smile on her lips, her last waking thought a wish that the morrow would hasten, a regret that she had not said that she would come to breakfast instead of waiting until noon. Why had she been so formal? What nonsense! She would go anyway. There was no need of stated hours with a friend like Edith.

What a life of amusement, of adventure was opening before her!

She awoke with a start. It was a long time before she could remember. She tried to piece the day and night dreams together and arrive at the truth. Suddenly every detail came to her, and she sprang to the floor with a gasp of joy. Usually it took her a long time to cross the chasm which separates the horizontal world from the perpendicular. This morning, from the sleep to the waking was a second, a mere blur on the blotting-page of time.

She commenced a hurried toilette with frequent glances at the clock. She made a cup of coffee over the gas stove and drank it standing. She was too restless, too excited to sip it leisurely, as she was accustomed to. She felt as she had the day before she was married and once again the day she had decided to come to New York to live.

She cleared up the room and arranged her hair several times. It was too early even to send the telephone message she had decided would announce the change in her plans. It was childish, of course, but she could not help picturing Miss Pigott's face as she heard the message, and smiled at the mental vision.

At length it was ten o'clock; surely even a dweller in the Waldorf-Astoria must be awake.

She ran lightly down the stairs to the basement. Outside the dining-room door was the telephone, and she took the receiver, furtively noting the crack in the door and Miss Pigott seated in front of the table with her dog at her side, busily engaged jotting up receipts.

She spoke distinctly to Central.

"The Waldorf-Astoria. Wal-dorf-As-to-ri-a—2840—Thirty-eighth street. Thank you."

She repeated the number, waited a moment, and then: "Is this the Waldorf-Astoria? Wal-dorf-As-to-ri-a? Thank you. Please give me Mrs. Worth's room—Mrs. Frederick Worth."

Another pause. She noted with a furtive, sidelong glance that the bull-pup's ears had assumed the position which marked attention on the part of the mistress. But she tapped her foot

and was apparently absorbed in the business at hand.

"Oh, is that you, dear? No? Oh, Clarisse! Oh, yes, Clarisse, I thought that was Mrs. Worth's voice. Not up yet? Well, no matter, tell her I am just coming up and thought I would telephone her. Thank you, good-bye."

She replaced the receiver, and lightly humming a tune ran up the stairs.

Just as she expected, in a few minutes Mary Ann, the maid, came into the room ostensibly to do some cleaning, in reality an *avant-courrier* of basement curiosity.

She hummed another tune airily, feeling herself at last of some importance, but arranged some articles on the mantel as if the morning promised nothing unusual.

Mary Ann stood, her arms akimbo.

"Goin' out, Mrs. Hayes?"

"Yes, Mary," and then curiosity to hear questions and a desire to explain overcame her inclination to play with the situation.

"I met a friend of mine last night at the Waldorf-Astoria. She is living there. We have always been like sisters. I don't suppose," she gazed contemptuously about the room, "that I shall stay here now very much. I shall keep the room, of course, for my husband will be coming back, but I shall spend most of the time with her."

She turned to the wardrobe after a pause and took out her jacket, which she commenced to brush vigorously. Mary Ann did not alter her position of open-eyed interrogation.

"If anyone should call or ask for me on the 'phone, be sure to tell them I am at the Waldorf-Astoria with Mrs. Worth. You won't forget the name? —Mrs. Worth, wife of the Western millionaire."

Mary Ann was impressed, as it was intended that she should be. It was a small victory, it is true, but even a small victory counts. She did not retort, as she might have done the day before, that nobody ever had called or asked for Mrs. Hayes during all the months she had been in the house.

A few minutes later the bell of the

telephone rang and for the first time the whirr thrilled. If it should be for her! How often she had heard that sound and envied others the cheap importance!

Mary Ann disappeared and came back panting.

"It's a message for you. I took it." There was a new inflection in the slavey's tone. "It's from your friend, Mrs. Worth, of the Waldorf-Astoria. She said she was going to call for you in a cab and take you to Sherry's for lunch."

"Thank you, Mary. I need not hurry, then." She took a quarter from her purse and handed it to the servant.

She sat at the window with hat and coat on and a novel in her hand, but her mind was occupied with its own thoughts. At last it had come true, everything she had dared dream—cabs, luncheons, Sherry's, money, freedom to spend it—all.

A week passed, two, three. As she had announced in the first thrill of her triumph, Betty spent little time in the lodging-house. She would come there at odd hours to change her gown, to get her letters, to pay her bill. Sometimes, as a joke, the two women would come in from their coupé, their arms laden with brown paper packages, and would cook a little luncheon on the gas stove, playing at picnicking, and that act, a short time before wept over as an evidence of her poverty and loneliness, was now a gala occasion for mirth, an appetizer to give more complex repasts a meaning.

They spent much time at Turkish baths, at manicure and beauty parlors; they drove in the Park and on Riverside; they dined and lunched wherever the mood took them; they had boxes at the theatre and opera; they did everything they could think of to kill time, content in each other's society. To Betty everything was new and delightful and her friend took a reflected pleasure in her childish joy.

In the lodging-house Betty soon noticed the change in her prestige. Once or twice the young woman on the

first floor ventured an assertion concerning the weather, and she had responded courteously, but had not continued the conversation. The music teacher had looked at her admiringly as she passed him in the hall and had kept the door open for her, a civility that met with a frigid bow. The landlady treated her by turns with effusion and insult, according to mood. Once she had allowed the dog to visit her, a rare favor, and again had noticed meaningly the touch of rouge on her face with a glance which held immeasurable insult in its vindictiveness. But even that was preferable to the indifference with which she had formerly been treated.

The new life both promised and fulfilled. The promises were of the kind familiar to the materially ambitious on the one hand and to the lonely in spirit on the other. The fulfillment did not always imply satiety, for satisfaction and satiety, though they have the same root, have different branches.

To Edith Worth beautiful clothes and an unlimited purse could not make amends for what she had lost in life. Always clinging, insufficient to herself, she was of the few to whom the multitude was but a unit and one in her eyes the multitude. When that one was absent, life itself dwindled into insignificance.

All this latent need for the sympathy of another she threw into her friendship for Betty Hayes. She must have someone near, someone to whom she was important, to whom the trifles of her life spelled significance.

But though fundamentally indifferent to luxury she was femininely human in yielding without protest to the encroachments of that insidious disease. No longer could she have risen by candle-light to prepare the early breakfast for her husband and after his departure taken up the deadening routine of housewifely duties, supplementing them as she had formerly done with long hours at the needle.

In the most humbly bred woman there seems a latent tendency to

languor which responds the moment the pressure is removed. Take the spur of necessity from the man and he answers by seeking other outlets for his activity; take it from the woman and she sinks oftentimes into apathetic acquiescence.

As wealth increased and unlimited service was at command, Edith Worth threw down the last burden of physical activity. She no longer gowned herself or attended to the details of her wardrobe; even the leaves of her book were cut for her and if her handkerchief was dropped, there was always someone to pick it up and present it with respect. The royalty of the old world is taken into the kitchen and dairy and taught the elements of housewifely skill; the royalty of the new is often too near the kitchen by inheritance to find in it the charm and novelty that princesses dare proclaim.

She read much, the activity of the physically indolent, random reading which fulfilled its mission of entertainment. She could talk gaily, superficially, when the mood was on her. She made an admirable foil to Betty's phlegmatic quiet of mind and activity of body which supplemented the hired service with many friendly acts of attention. It is not true that at the end of certain periods of life we find ourselves either advanced or retrograded. Many forces are taken from us, but they are replaced by others, and the sum total is much the same.

Edith Worth had lost the will and power which come perforce through poverty; she could no longer stand without props, but she was freed from much of the dross of the commonplace. Luxury gave her the leisure to cultivate the refinements of life, to preserve a spiritual outlook on existence, to give a loose rein to her need of loving and being loved, rare as it is beautiful.

She would have been a fair prey to some women of the vampire type; that she had not already become so in the months she had been left alone with no one but her maid for society was only to be explained by the law that nature, like man, protects the weak.

There was a certain sensitiveness, a withdrawal of spirit that eluded pursuit as effectively as a more aggressive manner of touch-me-not might have done.

Betty Hayes had none of the vampire element in her composition. Selfish, material, there was about her the attraction of the perfectly unartificial woman. Her faults, like her virtues, were unadorned. In this new relation she felt no special obligation, no restraining influence which held her acceptance in abeyance. She would have treated a poor friend the same if the matter of wealth had been in her say-so. Upon Edith Worth she felt that she had that claim which youthful friendship gives. She never questioned but that Edith had the same viewpoint.

One day Betty found something unwelcome on her dressing-table. It was a letter from her husband announcing his return. He would be with her almost as soon as she received it, and for a longer time than usual. He explained this change by elaborate business phrases; briefly, there was a certain "territory" in the city to be covered during the absence of another man on sick leave.

His return had always before been a welcome break in the monotony of her days. Now she felt a curious repulsion as she had felt that night they returned from the charming little dinner together, and she compared him unfavorably with the men she had seen in the palm room, men who had covertly flirted with her and opened the doors of her imagination by appeals to her vanity.

He had always been commonplace, but against the background of a country town, of a cheap lodging-house and second-rate restaurants this fact had not aroused any but fleeting touches of disappointment. She had accepted it philosophically, as she had her condition and its many lacks. And as the latter was atoned for in part by her pride in herself, her pleasure in her beauty and her many hopes, so, too, his

pride in her and his affection had compensated for his evident lack of those qualities which mark the man of the world, so-called.

Now everything was different. She was living her own life, separate as the poles from his. His return seemed almost like an intrusion.

She sat down and thought over the situation, an unusual acknowledgment with her that matters had reached a climax. She was like the great majority of womankind in this, that she allowed circumstance to unfold itself without the barrier of premature decision.

How would he fit into her life now? What would he require of her? How much liberty would she have? A month, two months he might be with her—an eternity. He had always been what is termed an easy husband, demanding little, giving all, but once or twice she had found that when it came to a question of essentials he was rock-bound, with an unwonted determination not to be reached either by argument or pleading. She felt instinctively that the present situation of affairs would arouse all his antagonism. He was jealous of a thought of hers bestowed elsewhere. He was jealous of his position as an honorable man, receiving only what he could repay, and he considered her a part of himself in this outlook. He would refuse to see, she felt sure, why she should live on the bounty of another.

There was coming now the struggle between inclination and duty. She was to take up the life of cheap living and cheap environments, getting her own breakfasts and even their dinners maybe, or sitting down in eating-houses where the linen was soiled, the waiters with greasy hands in place of the most immaculate service of one of the most superior hotels in the world; exchange poverty for luxury, withdraw herself from the magnificence in which she had basked so long that until she received the letter announcing his return she had almost forgotten that the life she was leading was not her natural existence.

It is a law that the higher one rises in the scale of complex evolution the more transparent the shell which hides the emotions and feelings from the gaze of the onlooker. The *femme d'esprit* has nothing to hide, no secret corner of her soul that is not carefully glassed in for the supervision of her friend at a discreet distance. It remains for the woman of the middle class to conceal the ravages of sorrow from those nearest. In all the intimacy of these two women no criticism of the husbands had escaped the lips of either. Both suspected the other's unhappiness, the loneliness, the disheartenment, but the seal of silence was not broken.

The letter was soon followed by a telegram. Betty found it one afternoon when she hurried in to change her dress for dinner and the theatre. It stared with a jaundiced expression from the dressing-table. She shoved it aside with a touch of disdain. So soon! The moment had come. He would be there at six and expect her to dine with him. It was his usual method of announcing that her period of widowhood was over.

She twirled it in her fingers after the first impulse of disdain. She glanced through the window at the waiting cab. Should she go or stay? Should she take her evening of pleasure which belonged to her by every right, or establish a precedent which meant months of sacrifice and perhaps the opening wedge of separation from the life so dear to her?

Her lips met firmly and her mental agitation found relief in tears. If she gave up now all was over. She would not do it. Why should a husband expect to keep a woman like her, young, beautiful, ambitious, in such surroundings?

She dressed hurriedly, as if fearful of her resolve. She penned a note hastily. Edith was feeling ill and depressed and she could not leave her alone. Would he call at the theatre, the Empire, at eleven?

She encountered Miss Pigott on the way out. The landlady smiled win-

trily. Betty was beginning to hate this woman with the cold, shrewd eyes, the insolent manner, the thinly veiled envy and all uncharitableness.

Miss Pigott had placed the telegram in the room and knew its import.

"You are going out?"

Betty treated the question airily.

"I have left a note explaining. It will be all right. Mr. Hayes understands."

She knew that Miss Pigott would find an opportunity to see her husband and would cleverly goad him with pin-pricks. Well, why should she care? As well Miss Pigott as another, and with a friend like Edith Worth what had she to fear?

She hummed a tune lightly and shut the cab door with a bang, expressive of freedom. There were still a few hours of enjoyment, at any rate. She would make the most of them. She mentioned the fact of her husband's arrival that night to her friend, but added to it no single word of delight or disappointment, and Edith respected her silence by replying only with conventional phrases of congratulation.

William Hayes read the note before he removed his hat and then threw himself into the chair to ponder its contents slowly, as was his wont, when the unexpected occurred. He was not a man quick in thought or speech, neither was he quick to anger, but as the fact of his wife's indifference penetrated his comprehension the blood mounted to his forehead and he breathed fast and hard like one who has over-exerted. It was nearly three months since he had seen her, and the friend whose illness she offered as excuse could not be indisposed to an alarming extent if they could go to the theatre. He would not have treated her in that manner.

At this moment Miss Pigott appeared at the door as if in search of someone.

"Is Mrs. Hayes out?"

He nodded brusquely. The sore was too recent to be touched lightly.

The landlady moved about the

room putting the towels in place. At the door she said softly:

"You must be too tired to go out to dinner. Come downstairs and take a bite with my sister and me."

His first impulse was to decline, but as she said, he was tired, and the thought of a lonely dinner in place of the one he had anticipated was too much.

"Thank you," he said graciously. "I will be down as soon as I have washed up."

After dinner, while he smoked a cigar and the younger woman had excused herself to go upstairs and play gospel hymns on the parlor organ, he came to the point bluntly.

"Has my wife been much with her friend, Mrs. Worth?"

The barrier to Miss Pigott's eloquence toppled over. She poured forth a diplomatic story, calculated to sting under a semblance of sympathy.

When he said good night he went upstairs as one who adjusts his back to a new burden. He stepped to the wardrobe and looked carefully at the costly gowns and hats, which gave material evidence to his landlady's stories of late hours, dissipation, money thrown about like water, days and nights of unexplained absence, the overthrow of an established routine of life.

He sat a long time at the window.

Meet her? Why should he go to meet her? She had shown how little his home-coming meant to her.

About half-past eleven a cab drove up. It was true what Miss Pigott said—that she never went anywhere now without a victoria or coupé at her beck and call. He left the window and lighted the gas. He was standing in the middle of the room when she entered. He was in his shirt-sleeves and his hair was disordered; there was a two days' growth of beard on his face.

They gazed into each other's eyes for a moment.

"So you've come at last!" he said surlily.

IV

"Yes."

She moved slowly to the wardrobe, opened the door and stood sheltered from his eyes while she took off her hat and wrap. She hung the jacket on a stretcher, putting tissue-paper in the sleeves. She had learned many little niceties from Clarisse.

She shut the door, locked it, then walked slowly to the mirror, arranged her hair and finally faced him where he still stood watching her, with anger blazing in his eyes. She had never seen that expression before.

She had not been purposely insolent in her attitude. She knew that a decisive moment in their lives had come.

There had been many times when they had quarreled over trifles, and after a sharp recrimination silence had supervened. With the morning light they had laughed at their pettiness and the incident had closed. There had never been a serious break.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I have returned."

Her voice and attitude conveyed rebuke. He felt all at once the repressive criticism of his surliness. His own fears, the insinuations of the landlady, were forgotten. He had not seen her for three months and she was more beautiful than ever. He looked awkwardly penitent.

She noted the change and took immediate advantage of it.

"We waited for you at the theatre. Edith was very sorry. She wanted to renew her acquaintance."

He hesitated for an answer. He wanted to mollify her. He realized all at once the crudity of the action of which he had been guilty. He seemed to reason with her judgment that two people beyond the raptures of early marriage could afford to treat each other with a lack of ceremony. It meant nothing.

What a gorgeous creature she was! His masculine sense did not take in the fact that she was dressed as would befit the wife of a financial magnate;

the costly accessories to him merely accentuated her magnificence, while they gave her a sureness of attitude which he could not define, but felt instinctively.

No wonder Miss Pigott was jealous of her, and how silly he had been to play the dupe!

He had little of the diplomat in his make-up. He stated his grievance clearly. He approached every subject by the shortest road.

He told her that he had been hurt by her absence. He had been unjust, perhaps, but it had seemed to him lack of affection that prompted her neglect. He described his great disappointment on reading her note. He knew that if the circumstances had been reversed it would have been impossible for him to play the recreant. He loved her more than he had ever done, even in their honeymoon, and each time that he returned he was more and more anxious to see her. Then he intimated the landlady's treachery.

She was scornful. "Cat!" she said briefly.

The terse epithet added to his penitence. He drew a mental picture of the hard-faced, shrill-voiced landlady, to the latter's disadvantage. Why were plain women always so hard on the better favored of their sex? It is a question asked many times by masculine curiosity.

He showed more evident signs of abasement. She maintained her attitude of hurt wonder.

But the closed incident leaves its imprint. The lonely home-coming, the bitter words of Miss Pigott, classified and brushed aside, had yet the power to arouse suspicion.

He woke the next morning with a sense of hurt dignity and a desire to reproach anew. Somehow he felt, in the crude garishness of the day, that he had been unduly weak. He could not reopen a controversy that had been closed with a caress, but the caress had not stupefied expectancy.

And the expected did not delay its coming.

About noon a cab drove to the door,

there was a light peal of the bell, hasty footsteps on the stair and the expression on his wife's face was indicative of the visitor's importance in her scheme of life.

Betty touched his shirt-sleeve significantly and held the caller at the door in a whispered dialogue, long enough to give him time to arrange his toilet. A great love makes one clairvoyant. There was something in her touch and look that made him conscious of the fact that she was shamed by his unkempt condition.

He adjusted his coat and tie hastily and stood flushed and embarrassed when Mrs. Worth came in.

He did not recognize the wife of the country clerk in the fashionably gowned woman, delicately perfumed, fresh from the tiring skill of her maid. She touched his fingers lightly, asked courteously for his health and ignored the past. He read in her indifference not that she was ashamed of it, but that it lacked interest like a read and re-read page.

He responded civilly to trivialities. He gathered from their by-play of eye and word much of the intimacy that his wife had pooh-poohed and the landlady had asserted. Their speech teemed with mutual understanding, their silence was significant.

He realized his unimportance. He had the feeling of an interloper. He read in the four eyes the belief that he was a jailer to an innocent prisoner.

Finally, as if wearied by the situation, Mrs. Worth said coaxingly:

"You will not mind if I take Betty away with me for the day? I am so lonely. I will bring her back tonight."

The words were a mere amenity. She did not anticipate a refusal. What reason could he urge if he wanted one?

He assented inarticulately. He felt himself a boor, but was unable to treat the situation lightly. The incident of the night before returned and added its weight of insolent presentiment to the present.

After the door was closed he knew that something had gone out of his life that would never return. He was

stranded, hopeless. His hands grasped at shadows, intangible, evanescent, elusive.

He smoked a solitary pipe, read the morning papers, and then went out for a solitary ramble among the crowds of Broadway.

On the stairs he met the landlady, who goaded him anew with an expression of pity. His answer was a gruff nod. He felt as if he hated her, as one hates the truth after an evening of pleasant lies.

A bad luncheon at a cheap restaurant, another long and aimless wandering, anything to keep away from the lonely room, then he was ready for weak penitence and the olive branches. He was tired of himself, of everything and everybody but the woman whom he adored and to whom he was no longer necessary.

He dined that night at Delmonico's, the guest of Mrs. Worth. He was uncomfortable in his evening clothes, still more uncomfortable to be the guest of a woman who was inviting him on sufferance. He had always played fairly the game of give-and-take; he had so far in his simple life accepted no obligations which he could not redeem in a suitable limit of time. He was choked in speech and thought by the unmanliness of his attitude. The two women chatted on, indifferent to his presence as they were to his absence.

He asserted himself but once. After the last excuse for lingering he put Mrs. Worth in her waiting carriage and arranged her train carefully about her feet. He prevented his wife from following.

"We will walk," he said briefly, and before any remonstrance could be made he had closed the door, given the word to the driver and put his wife's hand on his coat-sleeve as he stepped forth briskly down the brilliantly lighted Avenue.

Betty withdrew her arm pettishly. "I don't feel like walking. Why didn't you let me drive? You could have walked if you like it. I don't."

"There is no reason why we should

accept such favors. We are poor people. We can't return them."

"Return them? How silly! Why should we?"

"There's the best of reasons, to my mind."

They were perilously near another emotional earthquake, and Betty wisely bit her lips. Quarrels were facially disfiguring. It was really not worth while to become so agitated over trifles.

William Hayes's work in the city was light; it was a slack time; he was merely supplementary to the city force and had many idle hours.

During this interval he had much time to think. He pictured a series of home-comings, for even the least imaginative have moments of vision, each less happy than the last, for when the drifting apart begins there are strange and undreamed-of tides and currents which help to widen the channel.

But after the first few times of forgiveness and yielding to his wife's persuasions, he took his stand, plainly and uncompromisingly.

Personally he would accept nothing he could not return in kind—no theatres, no dinners, no drives in the Park and other perquisites which come to the hangers-on of luxury. His refusals were not argued; he knew them a relief to overtaxed courtesy. In moments of ironic humor he recalled the warmth of word and coldness of expression, but his humor oscillated equidistant between pathos and profanity.

And the valve of discretion was not always closed. Sometimes he showed his feelings in his speech, too often for domestic harmony.

It is true that he was a poor man judged by millionaire standards, but they had been happy enough!

There was no reason why they should be servile!

No self-respecting man or woman received favors continually. There was an unwritten law in regard to such things.

There were plenty of women in her own class whom Betty could find and associate with, if she desired. He

would have named the wife of a co-worker in the "business" if Betty's look of disgust had not driven it from his mind.

He tried to arouse her pride, to no purpose. He appealed in vain to the affection and amiability which had until this latest temptation withstood time, disaster, the daily irritations of wedded life.

Luxury she must have. She had tasted it. It was in her blood.

Every day had its tragedy of the trivial. Every hour was incoherent, for they were mentally and spiritually out of step. A furrow of gold prevented accord.

Many times Betty tore herself away from the entreaties of her friend, from the many allurements of her new life to return to her duty, hateful, undesired though it was.

She was not a good actress. She could not disguise her disgust at the surroundings she had once said needed but his presence to make a home. The spots on the tablecloths at the restaurants, the flagrant inattentions of ignorant waiters, the necessity of menial work when she cooked her meals, each had its separate expression of disgust which she did not endeavor to conceal.

And each expression had its stab of pain for the husband in whom the callous surface of custom was replaced by an abnormally developed sensitiveness.

He put words of disdain in her mouth when she forebore to speak them. He regretted her marriage for her. He misconstrued or construed too well her silences. Her speech was always capable to his excited fancy of double meanings.

He performed the rôle laid out for him, surlily. He called for her at the hotel or theatre when she desired; he received her excuses over the telephone when she decided not to return at night. And these decisions were more and more frequent as time went on.

One night the two women sat late in the luxurious sitting-room; Betty's

nerves rasped by the tone of her husband's voice as he listened to her reasons for not returning till the morning. They were gowned in silken kimonos, sipping champagne, and their unbound hair had received Clarisse's attention.

The hour of unreserve had come as it comes at length in every intimacy.

There was a sigh from Betty, a word from Edith.

"I hate to see you so unhappy."

"I hate to be unhappy, but I can't help it."

"He wants——?"

"That I should be with him all the time; in that awful place; in that poverty."

"Life is strange."

"Strange, indeed—yes."

"Here am I dying for my husband, willing to live in a garret, to give up everything, everybody."

Betty's eyes traveled over the room, then to her friend's face. She knew that she spoke the truth, but she could not help the expression of incredulity.

"It is hard to be separated, feeling as you do, but you are free and have no wish ungratified."

"But if you are separated, what matter if the wedge happens to be golden? I was happier in the old days when I did my own work and he came to me every night—much happier."

"But you couldn't go back now, with your delicate health and the habits that you have formed."

"I would be willing. I don't believe it would kill me, and his neglect may. He sends me jewels and gowns that he picks up here and there. He even imports them from Paris and Vienna in remorseful moments—you know it all. I have more money than I know what to do with, but it is six months since I have seen him—six months."

"He is coming soon?"

"I don't know. He has gone to British Columbia. I had a telegram tonight. He doesn't write any more. He wires every day instead. I doubt if he has time to read my letters. There is a new mine out there he is

interested in. Think of it—another mine!"

"There is perhaps someone else?"

"Absolutely not; I know that. If there were perhaps he could understand my complaints better. He thinks only that I am ungrateful. He doesn't take love into account in his scheme of life."

Betty shook her head. "If I had a husband like yours, who gave me everything, never asked questions, was loyal even though we were separated——"

"And if I had one like yours, who worshiped the ground I walked on, was miserable away from me, jealous of my friends, I should be so happy."

There was a moment's pause.

Edith's fingers strayed to the leaves of a magazine kept open by a gold paper knife heavily encrusted with gems. Her slender fingers withdrew the knife and she opened the book.

"I was reading something while Clarisse was brushing my hair. It reminds me of us. Listen:

"Two boats rocked on the river in the shadow of leaf and tree;
One was in love with the seashore and one was in love with the sea.
The one that loved the harbor the winds of the world outbore,
But kept the other, longing, forever against the shore."

"Don't you see? You want the great ocean and the strange waves and currents and no one to guide you or control you but your wish, and you are anchored fast in a little bay where the coast line wearies you and you are pulling continually at the rope. Haven't you seen a boat do that, as if it were alive and wanted to be free?"

"And I—I——"

With a tired voice, Edith continued:

"I'm adrift, adrift, with no one to care or help, and I'm weak and weary and I want, I want—him!"

She broke down in a sudden fit of hysterical weeping that racked her delicate body and seemed to tear her soul asunder.

Betty's eyes filled, too, but she was more controlled.

"And I—there has never been the great love such as you feel. Perhaps

if there had been, it would have been different.

"You know some women are like me. I believe they love things better than they do people. My mother was the same. She married for the reason that most of our mothers did, because it was expected of them. So did I. Everyone at home said, you remember, that William Hayes would make me a good husband and he was bound to succeed. Any man can give you love; that is easily won, but I worship success and power. I must have them. I can't be happy with commonplace-ness. I don't see why a man should expect to keep a woman's affection when he just goes along in a humdrum fashion and doesn't make good his early promise that won her. I suppose it's great to love a man with all your heart and soul and not care whether he is a success or a failure, but I think sometimes it is just as great to love the refinements and luxuries of life. We don't question royalty who have to marry rank, or anyone else who gives up passion for a career or for the permanence of an old name, or even for a principle. We think they are greater than just the ordinary people who yield easily to their emotions."

The speciousness of Betty's words appealed.

"I wish I were one of those women," said Edith softly.

For the moment Betty's words chilled her in her deepest, tenderest emotions; then she answered sweetly:

"I don't see any reason why you should be so unhappy. I can't help myself, for I shall do just as Frederick wishes until I die. He is my god and his word is my law, but you—you can do as you like. You are strong-willed, and your husband can't hold you against that will."

"You mean—a divorce?"

"No, no—not that."

"I don't believe in divorce, either," said Betty firmly. Her narrow life still environed her with its principles. "And if I did he would never consent; he would fight it to the bitter end."

"But a separation——"

"Yes, a separation, maybe."

"You will come to me? There will always be a home for you. It would make me so happy."

The good-night kisses were more affectionate than usual, and Edith's last words a repetition of her promise.

"You can come any time, any hour, tomorrow and for good. I need someone. I want someone to be with me—that I can make happy, too."

Betty tossed on her pillow and did not sleep. The thought had been in her mind many times, but to hear it on the lips of another gave it new force and direction.

A permanent separation, a good-bye forever to the shabby lodging-house, to the critical, unsuccessful husband and the banalities of her past life—it needed but a little determination on her part. Over and over she tabulated the arguments that she would use. They could not be more unhappy than they were at present, nor farther apart. They could still be good friends; he could come to see her when he willed. She could help him with her advice. It would be hard at first, but if he really loved her better than himself, as he claimed, he would not stand in her way. And so on, until the troubled sleep of early dawn came and added new arguments in its restless dreams.

When she next saw him he was seated as usual, smoking his pipe and reading his paper. She wondered ironically if he ever grew tired of either.

He looked up expectantly as she came in and read the feeling of intolerance and the necessity that had brought her back.

He had intended a loving word or gesture of greeting; to keep her, if possible, by his side through sympathy, if for no other reason, but he was irritated anew by her expression. She seemed always to put her fingers on the sore spot.

He spoke doggedly.

"I'm tired of this. It's got to stop!"

Lately she had met his remonstrances with a smile or a light word. She

had been so indifferent to his feelings that she no longer cared to hurt them.

She answered at once before the words were dry.

"I am tired, too; let us end it here and now."

"End it? What do you mean? It rests with you. It has always rested with you."

"You mean it?"

"Mean what?"

"You will let me go—for good?"

"Let you go?" He had spoken oftentimes in anger of her wish to drop him out of her life. He had really never believed his own words, for he had been bred in the belief that marriage was a permanent institution.

"Yes, I want to go where I am happy. I want you to give me my freedom."

She sat down and talked rapidly, using all the specious arguments she had rehearsed.

"I am to go to Edith. We will be like sisters. There need be no scandal, and who is there to care, anyway? I shall need nothing from you. You can keep all your salary. It is best for both."

He interrupted her to say:

"And when she gets tired of you?"

"She will not get tired. If she does," she answered insolently, "I could earn a living as good as this——"

"It is as good as you deserve."

"It could not be worse."

"You were satisfied once, and I have done my best. It is not my fault if I did not stumble over a gold mine."

She went again over the list of arguments. He did not interrupt her. His pipe had gone out. There was an odor of dead tobacco in the room and his breath through the stem sounded like the inarticulate murmur of a parched throat.

Finally she tried to coax him. She came and sat at his feet and tapped his knee gently with her fingers.

"Let us be good friends. Let me have my life to myself. You say you care so much for me you would make any sacrifice; make one now."

She started to her feet at a knock at

the door and the appearance of Miss Pigott, who came to ask if a handkerchief dropped in the hall belonged to her.

The landlady looked shrewdly from one to the other, at the flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes. She went out and closed the door with a satisfied, cynical smile.

If anything had been needed to nail Betty's determination it was the thought of longer enduring Miss Pigott's presence, or her duplicate in some other lodging-house.

She turned to face her husband with another prayer on her lips.

Something she saw in his face restrained her. She felt for the moment it were wiser to drop the subject.

"So," he said in a strange voice, as he rose and put his pipe on the mantelpiece, "you want a separation?"

What did that look of bitter resolve mean? She could not tell.

V

THE next morning he ignored the incident, and she waited, obstinately determined to reopen the conversation.

She spent more time with him in the following week than she had since his return, but her scheme was easily read; it insulted his intelligence and he balked her attempts by an obstinate silence when she approached the subject, immersion in his newspaper or withdrawal.

At the end of the third day he announced the date of his departure on his usual business trip. He was to be away six weeks.

She would like to have the matter settled before he went. She did not desire to leave him without formality. There would be sure to be an unpleasant aftermath.

She broke the ice at the moment when his bag was packed and the hour of leave-taking near.

"You have decided on what I asked you the other night?"

"What did you ask me?"

"About a separation."

"H'm!"

She turned fiercely.

"Don't treat me like a child! I intend to leave you. You can't hold me. I'd like you to let me go in peace, but if you don't——"

"Well?"

"I'll go anyway."

"What about the law?"

"The law cannot force me to live with you."

"I can sue your friend for alienation of your affections."

"You would not do that."

"No?" grimly.

She was stricken with surprise. He had no intention of doing such a banal thing. He spoke on the impulse of the moment, with the desire to tide over the difficulty of the present situation.

He looked at her ardently. The fact of his approaching departure obliterated for the moment the memory of their quarrels and estrangement.

The voluptuous curves of her figure were delicately outlined by the art of a Parisian dressmaker. The color of her gown, a faint heliotrope, reminded him vaguely of a certain light that came through the rose window in the church at home. Her black hat surrounded her curls with a coquettish halo. Her eyes were big, blue and brilliant. The odor of violets was exhaled from her web-like handkerchief. Her feet, in high-heeled slippers and silk stockings, peeped out alluringly from her many ruffles.

The mirror gave back his own reflection ironically. He was stout and beginning to show signs of baldness. He was not yet middle-aged, but looked it, for his face was deeply lined with the marks that tell of incessant struggling with uncompromising conditions that have demanded tribute in time and strength for the privilege of existence.

He had on a badly fitting, cheaply-made suit and a cheap tie. What right had he to think that he could hold a woman like his wife? What had he to offer her but his name?—and that was less than nothing.

A great wave of regret, longing, forgiveness overwhelmed him.

It was true, what she had taunted him with. He was commonplace and had not fulfilled his early promise. She might have married a man of importance if he had not deceived her into the belief that he was to become one himself.

He took a step toward her, but she did not notice. Her eyes were fixed on the face of the clock which marked the time of her coming rendezvous with her friend. She tapped her heel impatiently on the ragged carpet.

"Well?"

He halted and spoke in a husky voice.

"Don't do anything until I return. You are free, anyway, until then. Give me another month. Promise me that you won't leave me until we have had another talk. I was only fooling when I said that about the alienation of your affections."

Time, time at the price of his self-respect!

She gave the promise disdainfully.

"Very well, but it will make no difference. I have made up my mind."

At the door she paused; a sudden fit of remorse overwhelmed her.

She turned and came back hurriedly to see him gazing after her, the soul, bruised and beaten like that of a stricken animal, in his eyes.

She kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"I am sorry, but it cannot be helped. I cannot go on this way. We are both miserable. After it is all over, you will thank me. Take care of yourself, and when you return we will talk it over—like friends."

He went to the window and saw her get into the cab after shaking the choux of dainty ruffles about her feet with a gesture that made a man who was crossing the street look after her admiringly.

He hungered and thirsted for her with a wild desire that would not be appeased by argument, by disdain, by self-respect—which left him shaken and trembling.

In a quick moment he went over all

the events of their life together from the time of his courtship to the latter days when, thrown on each other's sole companionship, they had enjoyed the cozy outings in the big city, the little dinners, unpretending as they were, their hopes, ambitions and mutual confidences.

She was his wife. The veins stood out like whipcord on his brow—his wife, joined together by mutual consent, by church and state.

What should separate them? Not her will weakened by circumstances temporary in their power, not the will of others careless of the desecration they wantonly inflict. He would hold her in spite of herself. He would win her back to a normal existence, to the life she had always known.

Strong man as he was, he pushed aside the pipe and newspaper on the rickety table and placing his head on the cleared space wept the bitter tears that come to a man in his supreme agony, tears that testify to his divine relationship with the Man of Sorrows.

Four weeks passed in the monotonous routine of business for him, and for her an increased habit of luxury, a more violent determination to have a permanent separation. She still kept the room in the lodging-house according to his wish, and went back and forth occasionally to change her clothes or to get his brief letters simply enclosing the weekly allowance, but containing no words in regard to their future plans or the thoughts uppermost in either mind.

During this interregnum his duties of showing samples, of restoring the confidence of his purchasers shattered by some unforeseen accident, of vitalizing the indifferent, of beating down and raising prices, were performed perfunctorily. Always was the undercurrent of his domestic misery. The storm and stress of this time aged him visibly.

Over and over his mind followed the rut of uninspired thought. He had said in his anger that he would hold her to her vows, but how could this be done? She could leave him and he had no redress. She could get along

without him well enough. His allowance to her, once sufficient to her needs, was now but a little pin money for her whims. Its withdrawal would not cause a pang, for she had lost the self-respect which made it valuable as an evidence of freedom.

But the sending of this miserable stipend and her acceptance of it was now their only tie.

He made certain arrangements with the home establishment by which he obtained a leave of absence. He hardly knew why he asked it, but that he was not well was evident to the most casual observer; the unnatural brilliancy of his eyes, his trembling hands, the sallowness of his skin, his husky voice, were all silent advocates to his aid.

He did not notify her of his arrival, and, as he expected, she was absent. The room had the air of being long untenanted; there was a mustiness, an indefinable desolation which chilled his spirit anew. A filmy cover of dust was over everything; a withered corsage bouquet lay on the table.

He opened the window and inhaled the cold night air with long breaths, as one who returns to consciousness after a period of inanition.

He was bracing himself for an ordeal.

He pushed his hat on the back of his head, removed his cuffs and coat and then descended to the basement.

The spinster sisters were wrangling over their supper, and the dog growled a welcome.

Miss Pigott attempted to infuse a few caustic suggestions concerning his wife's absence in the enthusiasm of her greeting.

He wasted few words. He was going right away, suddenly, that night. It was necessary for the trunks to be packed and sent immediately. Could he have Mary Ann to help?

Later, when Miss Pigott found him amid the débris of packing, his explanation threw no light on the situation; there were business changes such as come into the life of every man. He offered generous largess for the lack of notice.

She resented the withdrawal, for

she would lose two reliable lodgers; but she resented more the fact that she was not taken into his confidence, that she was not told the truth, but was brushed aside with specious falsehoods. Something had happened. His wife knew nothing of this resolve, for no woman would allow her beautiful clothes to be packed by a boarding-house slavey. Was he going to kidnap her? She smiled with cynical amusement. He would have a hard time taking her away against her will. And if not that move, what was it?

After all, she would not be in at the death. She would not have a chance to triumph over the humiliation of the woman she hated for her beauty, her good fortune, her insolence, her husband.

But she accepted the inevitable, the bounty and the promise to return when business brought him that way. It was the policy of the astute landlady to speed the parting.

At the door he paused and looked about the dismantled apartment. He had been happy there as well as unhappy. The last few months had increased his capacity for suffering, but they had also increased his capacity for sensitiveness. He recalled their white hours, their little suppers and dinners, the long talks and hopes of the future, their tired home-comings after merry-makings. He recalled visions of her dressed for walking, in her *négligée*, in the early morning hours fresh with sleep, at night with her golden hair ruffled about the pillow at his side.

He closed the door abruptly and went out. The shrill tones of Miss Pigott's voice accompanied him.

"Any time either one of you wants to return I shall be delighted."

"Either one!" He read in those syllables her knowledge of the coming separation, her belief that they would never return together.

He made all the necessary preparations for departure. He got his tickets, engaged a sleeper and checked the trunks. Having accomplished this, he drove to the Waldorf-Astoria.

Clarisse kept him waiting a moment; then he was admitted.

Mrs. Worth greeted him pleasantly; his wife as if he were a casual visitor to whose coming and going she was indifferent. She had determined on her plan of action. Sentiment was to be rigidly excluded.

He took advantage of Mrs. Worth's withdrawal to say earnestly:

"You will return with me tonight? There is much that I would like to say that I cannot say here."

"Very well, but I have not been there for ten days. The rooms must be in a frightful state." And she shuddered at the prospect of a night spent amid such surroundings.

"I have been there and attended to everything."

His coming had interrupted a most interesting conversation, and after his greeting it was continued.

Mrs. Worth had just received an unexpected letter from her husband. He was on his way to her and might arrive at any time. It was the letter which had caused her withdrawal. She must read it by herself, shut out from the world. Its closely written pages was a marital compliment she had not received for a long time.

When she returned she swayed a little, torn by emotion. She was so fragile that she only intimated the spirit—the spirit of passion. Her costly lace gown in the latest fashion accentuated her attenuation, her colorless face. Her pale eyes seemed to suggest a once bright flower which the ardent flame of the sun had faded into the ghost of a blossom.

She was an impression merely, a sketch, as if the hand of the painter had not returned to its work. And she had but one vital impulse—to turn lingeringly, longingly to the light.

Her Sun had once again smiled on her and she was happy, with a wild delirium that for the first time since the renewal of their friendship made Betty's heart contract with the fear that the time might come when she would be outranked, even forgotten. A weak body influenced by two forces

responds to the greater, and Betty was not the greater.

With the fear hundreds of possibilities flashed into her mind. Suppose Edith's husband did not like her, or disapproved of an alliance formed through a marital separation? They had been indifferent in the old days at home, and his sole communication regarding her was to congratulate his wife on having found an old friend to relieve her loneliness.

What would her future be if her fear came true?

She knew Edith well. A word from her husband and their friendship might end, annihilated in a second. She had no will, no wish of her own, when he was present.

"He may be here any time," she said shyly, as a girl might speak of her recently avowed lover; "any time, dear: think of it!"

She had forgotten her visitors; her eyes were luminous with new thoughts.

"For a long time?"

Betty's voice recalled her.

"No, not for long." She spoke regretfully. "He does not say except that it is a business trip, and——"

"Yes?"

Betty's voice again recalled her wandering spirit.

"Oh, he is to give a big dinner to some of the people interested in one of his new schemes, and their wives, and he says I must go, wear my prettiest gown and my new diamond necklace."

"Diamond necklace?"

The astonishment in the question acted as a dash of cold water.

"I'm sure I don't remember. Clarisse will know. Clarisse?"

Betty shrugged her shoulders in exasperation. Was there ever such a woman, so hopelessly infatuated, not to know or care when she received a princely gift?

Clarisse answered the question promptly.

"It was a week since, just as you go to drive, madame. You say to me, 'Clarisse, put the paquet in the safe.' *Voilà* the receipt, madame!"

"You did not open it?"

"Open it, madame, without your command? Most *certainement non*."

"Very well!"

"I am sure it is all right," explained Edith, seeing Betty's stare of amazement. "I forgot to tell you, dear, but he sends me so many useless things, no wonder I forget, and besides, with no place to wear them."

"But let us see it," persisted Betty.

If she could not have these things herself, it was something to touch them, look at them, envy their possession, dream they were her own.

What good fortune some women had, jewels flung in their path for them to kick aside, and she—with nothing.

Meanwhile William Hayes sat in his corner, unmindful, unwitting the fact that Fate was playing into his hands; that the return of the husband, and the necessary separation of Betty from such a reunion, might be used to his advantage. What he did feel was the usual sense of isolation when he was with the two, the knowledge that he was an intruder to their intimate intercourse.

He took advantage of the conversation to say:

"I would like to get a paper at the office. I can get the package for you at the same time."

Edith smiled her consent. "If you will."

A sudden impulse came to her to dress as she would for the dinner; it would help calm her excitement and keep the thought of her husband more persistently in her mind.

She suggested it to Betty, who, ever amenable to sartorial suggestion, fell into the scheme.

"Wear the new rose."

"Would you? Fred likes me in white."

"But that is so delicate, so becoming; it gives you just the right touch of color."

"Very well. Clarisse?"

As Hayes walked to the office, he recalled the evening Betty and he had

taken their first dinner there. Since then people and things had assumed more normal proportions. Familiarity had not bred contempt, but it had robbed him of self-consciousness. He felt himself as good as any and was able to separate vulgar ostentation from the simplicity of breeding. The clerk nodded to him; he had often taken Edith's jewels to the office on his way out at night, and after a moment's scrutiny of the receipt handed him a small, sealed box.

As he took it and walked away, an unbidden thought leaped in his mind. He felt that he held in his hand something which, if represented in dollars, meant more than he could earn or save in his entire life: a few stones so insignificant to the woman who owned them that she had absolutely forgotten their existence. He recalled what Edith had read from the letter: that her husband had bought them from an English peer who had come to the new world to redeem his life of dissipation and had finally sold the last vestige of a great name and rank for half the value of the stones, to invest in this newest scheme of the Western Midas.

How strange the life of precious stones! How many tragedies were haloed about their crystalline secrecy!

What their possession would mean to Betty and himself—reconciliation, happiness—and the owner would never miss them.

His cheeks burned at the base thought. He was an honest man; it was the first time that an idea of that kind had ever entered his mind.

Another followed in place of the one destroyed, one so astounding, so subtle that he almost flew through the corridor and panted into the elevator with eyes aflame. He wanted to get rid of his burden as soon as possible.

Edith was in a cloud of rosy gauze and Clarisse opened the package and drew out the necklace, a thing of flame which palpitated with life as the trio gasped with amazement. It was a wonderful, a beautiful, a priceless

thing. The stones matched perfectly. They were the rare blue diamonds of the old East Indian mines.

Betty could not repress the accusation which had waited its opportunity.

"The idea of forgetting it! How could you?"

"You know I don't care for diamonds," said Edith apologetically, bending her neck for Clarisse's supple fingers. "See how they overpower me. I should never wear them. I shall have to rouge and use belladonna or no one will know that I am inside it." And she laughed merrily. "Pearls are my stones. I always tell Fred not to buy diamonds, but he says they are a good investment."

"He's right," said Hayes quietly, fingering the empty box. "Some men carry their entire fortunes in these stones. They are available capital everywhere."

"Let me try it on," begged Betty.

Edith unclasped the necklace and handed it to her friend.

What Edith claimed was true. She was too insignificant a personality for the bright display of the cold brilliants, which seem to demand of humanity its most vital types for their proper background.

Betty looked like a beautiful Norse goddess who had broken an icicle and strung it on a frozen cobweb for her adornment. She took off the necklace with a sigh.

Edith answered with a sigh. "They ought to be yours by good right. They suit you."

Clarisse fastened the packet and handed it again to Hayes.

"On your way home," protested Edith, anxious to save him further trouble.

"I might as well now." And, after hesitating a moment awkwardly, he went out.

He sauntered through the corridor and then went into the Turkish room and sat for a long time in a secluded window-seat. The temptation had returned. He did not refuse to listen this time, but weighed its possibilities carefully. There was much to be

said in its favor; much against. There were pros and cons.

It is true that his honesty in business and in social relations had been phenomenal. It was no time to think of that now.

What would taking his wife away for a few days accomplish? Nothing. It would but leave him with added memories to regret. He could see from her manner, her voice, her eyes, that the end had come. She had yielded the last time.

All the arguments he had determined to use, all the pleadings, when he repeated them seemed all at once to lose force and meaning. They had seemed strongly based, on the railway trains, alone at night in a wretched hotel, for his own isolation had made them vital; face to face with her in her luxurious environment, they seemed futile.

If he did anything, this was the thing to do. It was a big, decisive act; it would show him to be no longer a weakling, at least.

He fingered the package restlessly.

Suddenly he rose, went into the corridor, walked to the desk and handed the clerk the box.

VI

WHEN they emerged from the hotel after effusive good nights on the part of the two women, and promises for the next day's meeting, he led her to a waiting cab and helped her in tenderly, arranging her dress with care and squeezing himself into the corner so as not to disarrange her gown.

She smiled scornfully. He was apparently trying to placate her. The cab ride was a peace offering. How little he knew her! It was like buying a bonbon for a child who has demanded the moon.

Suddenly she seemed aware of the wrong direction.

"We are going too far downtown. Open the trap and tell the man; he must be intoxicated."

The moment had come; he spoke quietly.

"We are driving to the ferry. I gave him the direction."

"To the ferry? What do you mean? Let me out."

He stammered a little now.

"I have a few days' vacation, and I thought perhaps you would spend them with me in Atlantic City."

"But I don't wish to spend them in Atlantic City. I have no clothes. I——"

"I packed your trunk and have already sent it. I bought the tickets on my way to the Waldorf."

"You——" For a moment she lost her accustomed amiability, and as he watched her anxiously he noted that her face was white with rage.

His tone did not show his fear. "The bags are in the sleeper. I gave up the room at Miss Pigott's."

She reached up her hand to open the trap, but he caught and held it.

"I knew you would be offended with me, but I thought perhaps if I took you by surprise and asked it as a favor you might come. It is the last one I shall ask of you for a long time. Won't you?"

She thought of the trunkful of expensive clothes, of the trinkets, the many costly presents she might lose if she acted too hastily. He could keep them and she would have to resort to the law to regain them. That would mean a scandal, and Edith hated anything of the kind. She was in a dilemma.

Her husband took advantage of her hesitation.

"We have to talk over the future, and I didn't feel that I could stand it there, where we were so happy—at first. I did not feel that I could part in that little room."

His voice shook with feeling, and in the sudden flare of a street lamp as they turned a curve she noted the feverish brilliancy of his eyes.

She thought rapidly.

Atlantic City! It was but a few hours' journey. She could regain her wardrobe, take a farewell without bitterness, be relieved from the fear of further aggressions on his part and

return tomorrow or the next day. After all, what did a few hours matter?—and it was, as he stated, for the last time. He had been good to her, very good, and she had not treated him well. She owed him something and at the acknowledgment, quietly made to herself, she felt a thrill of self-righteousness.

She leaned back in her place and made no further protest, yet through the journey he breathed the atmosphere of renunciation and martyrdom.

The thought of Edith's husband had helped to her decision. He might come that very night, might be already there, for the postmark of the week-old letter told nothing. He had a way of zigzagging about, and when he came Edith had told her it was always at an hour's notice, sometimes without any. It would be a graceful act for her to withdraw for a time; they would both appreciate it—she hoped. She would write Edith everything and he would read the letter; then—if he did not want her . . .

She sat erect in a tremor of fear. If he did not . . .

Nonsense! of course he would. He would make a flying trip; Edith had said so. He would be delighted to know that she had someone with her to relieve her loneliness; anyone with half an eye could see how his wife had improved in spirits and in looks since she had companioned with her. She thrust the fear from her by a strenuous effort.

William Hayes had brushed aside all the indecisions that entangle the ongoing feet. At whatever sacrifice, he had determined that he must prevent his wife from separating her life from his.

The mere idea of acquiescing in her wish seemed to him like deliberately putting a cup of poison held by another to the lips and drinking at that other's bidding.

What would existence be to him without her? Death, a dreary, long-continued death, that was all.

He knew of men who took their lives for such a cause. If he were

braver, or less brave, he would do the same.

He pictured his years alone: old age creeping on, finding him unloved and unloving, losing ambition when there was no one to work for or think about, drifting into the temptations which ruin soul and body alike, losing his grip on commercial duties, thrust aside, insulted, forgotten, a human derelict.

There could not be another woman in his life. If he lost Betty, he never wanted to speak to a woman again—he never would.

No, he could not, he would not lose her.

They spent the night in Philadelphia, and the following day proceeded to Atlantic City.

It was the Easter season there, and boardwalk, hotels, streets and booths were alive with a gay crowd who seemed to have lost all sense of responsibility in the mere joy of living.

It was all new and delightful to her. It was her first real view of the sea, but that interested her less than the fine hotels, the holiday atmosphere of the people, the alluring booths, the rolling-chairs filled with one, two and sometimes three fares rumbling slowly up and down with their darkey attendants; the pounding of the waves on the sand, the donkeys with their freights of white-gowned children, the sculpture of the sandman, the this, that and the other of a gala occasion—each in turn amused.

After she had taken a few gowns from her trunk she spent the rest of the morning in sightseeing. She had but one regret—if only Edith were with her to enjoy the many delights. She determined that they would come down later, together, when Edith's husband had returned to his affairs and her own separation was complete. She wondered why they had never thought of it before, yet the reason was obvious. Edith was essentially a home-stayer and she had not believed any place could be so charming as New York, when viewed from the Waldorf-Astoria.

After luncheon she strolled into the writing-room of the hotel and wrote a long letter to her friend. No detail of her trip was omitted and no reservation was withheld as to her frame of mind. Every dissatisfaction was rehearsed, and the fact was baldly stated that she was through with her marital obligations. She but waited Edith's word to return for good.

She walked through the hall and posted her letter; then she hesitated a moment at the elevator—an afternoon nap or the boardwalk?

She finally decided on her room, for the journey had tired her and she wanted to be fresh for the hotel dinner. The crisis in her affairs had not destroyed her vanity.

Her husband watched her withdrawal and after a few moments approached the clerk.

"My wife has forgotten to put an enclosure in the letter she just posted. It was directed to Mrs. Frederick Worth, Waldorf-Astoria, New York."

The clerk handed the letter to him and he returned to the reading-room, emerging soon to drop another letter in the box, and, thanking the clerk for his courtesy, he strolled into the air and walked impatiently up and down, up and down the interminable walk.

So far, so good. There was at least a respite of a few hours. What would she do when her friend did not respond to her request for aid? A second letter would follow the first, of course. He must be on the lookout for that, unless events made it unnecessary.

He remained on the walk all the afternoon. Later she joined him in her dinner gown and together they watched the nocturnal architecture outlined against a sky radiant with strips of scarlet and gold, saw what was in the daytime a mass of hideous buildings mellowed into ghostly suggestions of soft grays and browns. Side by side, they saw the color disappear from the sky to be replaced by millions of electric lights outlining the entire sea-city with geometric figures, while at their feet the waves broke into soft, irides-

cent bubbles, as if bowls of soapsuds had been upset on watered silk, to become suddenly black as ink with luminous touches of foam.

But the beauty of the scene did not bring their spirits together. In it she saw but suggestions of strange, undreamed-of places she would visit with Edith when she was relieved of the onus of the present situation; in it he saw the grandeur of eternal verities too great and vast to be troubled by the pain and despair of the unit man.

He had brought her there to talk of their future. But he avoided the subject, apparently fearing the crisis, and she was indifferent. Just as soon as she received the answer to her letter she would go. It would be time then to say good-bye, and there was nothing else to say. The fewer words, the less unpleasantness to remember.

They ate their dinner with almost a return of the old-time cheerfulness. He wanted to forget, and she was careless of all but the day and hour. The music, the glass of wine, the glances of admiration, all went to her head. Later they strolled on the boardwalk and watched Bohemia, its habitués interspersed here and there with young girls and their beardless escorts, the former having escaped the watchful eye of chaperon or relative.

The next day passed in much the same way. She felt the relaxation of the sea air after months without climatic change. She wondered why she did not receive a telegram, but she did not worry. "It will come," she said, as she curled herself in a corner of a rolling-chair and watched the crowds, while a darkey with a huge jonquil in his buttonhole wheeled her up and down.

She admitted to herself that if the coming of Edith's husband delayed the writing of the letter she awaited, a day, two days, even three, she could be quite content, for the holiday scene was so alluring and its gaiety so contagious that she did not bother to remind herself of the reason for her being there.

Her husband did not intrude upon her. He acted as her escort when she

requested it, walked by her side, found her comfortable seats, brought her books to read and then betook himself to a distance to smoke and read.

The next day she inquired once or twice for letters or telegrams; she was not worried at the negatives she received, but had the true feminine belief that the important letter is sure to go astray.

She wrote again, accentuating her misery at the enforced separation, and again announcing her return when the word should be received.

It is true she might telegraph, but the limitations of a telegram would only have to be amplified in a letter, and there was the difference of only a few hours. Edith's husband had returned; they were naturally engrossed with each other. The silence would surely be explained. She must be patient.

Her husband, strolling across her field of vision as she wrote, offered to stamp and post her letter for her.

It was awkward, but she had no money and had used her last stamp. She gave it to him and saw him cross the hall; then her attention was distracted for a moment.

Edith woke the next morning after Betty's departure, had her cup of chocolate in bed, re-read her husband's letter, finished the chapter of an engrossing novelette and then put herself into Clarisse's hands for the day's renewal.

At eleven she ordered the maid to telephone to Betty's lodging-house. Miss Pigott answered the call.

"This is Mrs. Worth."

"Yes; Mrs. Hayes is out."

"You don't know when she will return?"

"No. She did not leave any word. Mr. Hayes is out, too."

"Thank you."

Clarisse repeated the message verbatim.

Miss Pigott, at her end of the line, hung up the receiver with a smile of satisfaction.

So Mrs. Worth did not know of the

departure! It was just as she had imagined. He had taken his wife away; but what arguments had he used? What did it mean?

She was irritated at the puzzle, but she saw no way to satisfy her curiosity. She determined, however, to help him in the scheme by pretending ignorance of his plans.

Edith took her drive, and later in the day called at the lodging-house.

Mary Ann had been instructed and responded volubly.

"She's out, Mrs. Worth; hasn't been in all day and didn't leave any word. She went out with him."

"You are sure?"

"I'll run up and see."

"Do, please."

Mary Ann's quick feet ran upstairs.

Mrs. Worth heard her knock gently, loud, and then louder, heard her call and then try to open the locked door.

She put a silver piece into the maid's hand and said:

"Tell her to come right up as soon as she comes in, will you, Mary?"

The slavey's expression of disappointment did not imply sorrow for Mrs. Worth's fruitless quest, so much as it did a knowledge that the many stray bits of silver that had come her way would now cease.

When Edith reached the hotel she forgot her surprise at Betty's unexpected independence at sight of a telegram.

She opened it with trembling fingers. Her husband would be with her in an hour or two.

She dressed feverishly. She had Clarisse send for fresh flowers. She ordered a special menu for their dinner and then countermanded the order. She walked restlessly up and down, every step in the corridor bringing the color to her cheeks. She asked Clarisse half a hundred times if she looked well, if she had grown older, if she was gowned as becomingly as she might be in something else.

She was like a bride awaiting the bridegroom of her choice. She spent the moments preceding his arrival in an anticipation painful in its intensity. She

had forgotten Betty, Betty's troubles. Her real loneliness that Betty had never filled was over. He was coming, was near her, had come.

She trembled out of a bath of pleasurable expectations into his arms.

Frederick Worth would be picked out in any crowd of men as a dominant force. No one could look in his face without finding in it those physical attributes which the world has learned to associate with success. He had the deep-set eyes, the aquiline nose of a Cæsar or Napoleon. Ambition was his Frankenstein, a monster devouring, little by little, his strength, his time, his thought.

He was in constant struggle with the inhumanities of life. People were to him the stepping-stones; material things had no personal charm, did not appeal to his senses nor his intellect. They were symbols merely of his on-going for the subjugation of those used to consider them the hall-marks of the great.

He had loved his wife as the unthinking male loves at the mating age. He would have loved another woman just as much, or just as little.

She appealed to him through her delicacy, her refinement, her passionate yearning, as a child might hold with its tender fingers in a grip stronger than an iron band. But when the mood came he could without a regret unloosen those tendrils and forget their claim.

What he wanted was power; to stand among his fellow-men a confessed force, to be isolated by superiority among his peers.

His financial success was now so assured that for the future it needed but the firm will and the concentrated brain to hold what he had gained. It is the acquisition of the first million that counts; after that, opportunity comes with flying feet and will not be driven back.

What he desired now was social prestige. He had wakened to the fact that success is like a stone with many facets and he had seen the light shine

on but one. He would turn it and later still again, for his ambition scaled greater heights and he dreamed of political prestige, a seat, later, when the time was ripe, in the Senate.

For the first time he looked on his wife as an important factor in his on-going. There could be no social supremacy without her aid. She had always seemed a plaything, sometimes a heavy weight, as playthings are apt to be in busy hours. In these last years he had only thought of her as inconsequent. Now he was coming to her almost in the light of a suppliant.

He gazed at her with a new criticism after the caresses were over. He breathed a sigh of relief as he noted forgotten charms of face and figure. Certainly she had improved, she was younger, more radiant, less oppressed with physical and spiritual languors.

Her childlike beauty, her fragile delicacy, her perfect taste in dress, her light, volatile chat, her unbounded trust and admiration for him were all available assets, for he was a student of the complexities of life and realized that if a woman has missed the early training in society, the next best thing is to lack aggression, to be an amiable, negative force. She would be plastic to any change.

He unfolded his scheme to her very diplomatically as they rode in the Park the next day after his arrival. Society was to be a new toy for her amusement, he phrased it, not wishing to frighten her with a sense of coming responsibility. It was to be merely a relief from the loneliness from which she had suffered so long, from which, perhaps, she would not have to suffer so much in the future.

She caught his meaning and enlarged on it. She would have parties and go to them—with him by her side. They would travel—together.

He assented to all and led her playfully to further imaginings. Finally she announced that she would forget him among her new friends and pleasures. He responded in a mocking spirit, and when they alighted at the hotel they were both gaily laughing

like children, she more deeply in love with him than ever, if that were possible, he for the first time conscious of the return of a far-off, forgotten sentiment, at which he wondered curiously.

When they entered the salon they found waiting for them the social sponsor whom Frederick Worth had selected for his need.

This sponsorship had been a bitter pill for Mrs. Van Diemer to swallow, but to her surprise she found it sugar-coated.

There was none of the Western crudity she had feared; the man was pitiless, proud, powerful; the woman, tender and clinging. One appealed to her strength, the other to her weakness, and her spirits rose at this unexpected reconciliation with Fate. She likened Edith, in her mental summing up, to a flower that had bloomed in a cloister, and determined to warn her husband against the faintest shadow of antagonism in his financial relations. This was not a man to deceive or fight; he was the born leader and, a leader herself, she recognized the traits.

An eavesdropper would have learned nothing of significance in the idle chat and the promise of social amenities to come. Edith herself did not dream of the far-reaching relations, of the months that had been spent in preparing for this hour, of the vitality and fortunes offered gladly for its need.

Her husband waited eagerly for her to ask leading questions concerning Mrs. Van Diemer. Instead, she spoke of Betty, for the sound of a woman's voice, the rustle of a feminine gown had brought back the thought of her friend. She reproached herself keenly for her disregard.

He had intended to give the first lesson in her social course, to make her understand, tactfully, Mrs. Van Diemer's standing, but he controlled his impatience.

He listened while she told the whole story of their renewed intimacy, of Betty's unhappiness and the life together they had planned.

At her request he called up the lodging-house, and Miss Pigott trium-

phantly announced the flight. The Hayeses had gone, bag and baggage, good riddance to them. She did not know where. She did not care. That was the epitome of the dialogue.

"What does it mean?" asked Edith in amazement. It was unbelievable. Betty to go away without telling her! She looked at him for the solution of the mystery.

"It means that he has temporized with a situation he cannot command. He has taken her away, but she will escape him and any moment she may walk in on us."

"Dear Betty," answered Edith, sweetly unconscious of the growing storm.

He guarded his voice and manner well. It was necessary for him to move slowly, surely in this matter.

In his heart was a contempt for the two—for the man too weak to control his wife, for the woman content to live on the charity of another woman. The Hayeses, who were they? Nothing—nobody. They must be swept aside like dead leaves. It was a situation that demanded finesse, but he felt equal to its promised subtleties.

And Edith, the tribute to friendship paid, forgot anew and listened eagerly while he told her of the importance of Mrs. Van Diemer's acquaintance and how much it would please him should she gain it.

VII

FREDERICK WORTH had learned early in life the truth that when the explorer cuts into a new road there is no detail of topography too trivial for his notice. It is only when the path has been cleared, the map of progress under way and initial difficulties surmounted that he can afford to turn his back and explore anew.

His return to New York had for a compelling motive the intention of starting a social campaign by means of the wealth of which he was the possessor, a wealth so great that he had long ceased to take into consid-

eration any limit of expenditure, invested in so many interests that there were few people whose say-so he could not reach and influence when he desired.

While he was to all intents and purposes wrapped in the contemplation of a new path tunneling through rocky barriers for another vein of gold, personally superintending its route far from the outskirts of civilization, he was, in reality, at the very heart of complex life tunneling with like precision into the strongholds of a protected circle where passage is to be gained easily enough if one knows the open sesame, but where a false step may land the voyager into the bottomless depths of forgetfulness.

His selection of the Van Diemers for his sponsors was not a chance move, for he went warily when important matters were under consideration, but was the outcome of a sifting process, where every name of social prominence had been carefully considered and carefully eliminated.

It was in this study that he learned certain facts concerning the Van Diemers that suited his purpose well.

Like many men of his stamp where zeal and indiscretion go hand in hand, Van Diemer was interested in many schemes, and the earthquake of one might easily result in the overthrow of so many that failure was assured. Mrs. Van Diemer was not blind to the ease with which her husband was made the prey of overweening ambition and egotism. She had seen two fortunes sacrificed, and anticipated a third and last. She moved, however, the embodiment of success, in a world whose vital spark was the life of her soul. She had been born and bred there, and outside of it she only knew a chaos of space as she would have stepped from the physical earth into boundless space if gravitation were suddenly overcome by a superior force. The spectre that haunted her day and night was the spectre of financial ruin, a fear from which she had never been freed since the last sudden fall and miraculous recuperation, and she did

not anticipate a repetition of the miracle. To be freed from this dread there is no sacrifice she would not have gladly made.

One night she returned from the theatre during the middle of a play, at the agonized request of her husband, who took advantage of a moment's inattention of the party to make his request; his fevered glance told her the worst, but her farewell was spoken as if the sudden headache was her only reason for withdrawal. Twice before in the ten years of their married life she had faced the end of everything, and she went away, lips firmly pressed together, believing that her death warrant had been signed and sealed.

There had been an unaccountable flurry in the stock market and serious interests that he had believed perfectly secure were threatened. If the worst happened, as he believed it would, he could not possibly weather the gale.

She went through the functions of the next few days, suave and smiling, with fine gradations of manner marking the exact importance of each person who crossed her path, her heart aflame, her mind an inarticulate cry for help.

The flurry ceased as it suddenly came. The keyboard manipulator in a Western mining town had accomplished his purpose. Secret pressure was brought to bear and the name of Van Diemer, which had come unscathed from two *débâcles*, was pledged to the promise that the unknown wife of a famous financier should penetrate into the fastnesses of America's most exclusive society.

All this took months to accomplish, but when Frederick Worth strolled into his wife's room no word of his deed passed his lips. He looked at the filmy creations on bed and chairs and laughed at their seeming inconsequence. He did not care to hamper her with the knowledge that she was to face a number of hypercritical women, yet, realizing it himself, he allowed no trifle to escape his observation. To her Mrs. Van Diemer's dinner was but the beginning of a long series of merry makings where he would be her companion;

to him it was the closing of the first volume of a long and difficult series of manipulations.

"A woman's dress," he said slowly, changing from a careless glance to a serious contemplation, "is a symbol of her husband's success, a frame to her possibilities, an example of her taste and refinement."

At his tone Edith realized that she wanted to appear at her best to please him, and she took one gown after another in her hands to show—the mauve satin, the turquoise velvet, the filmy rainbow.

He shook his head at each in turn, and finally lifting a cobweb of white draped her laughingly about the shoulders with it as if the act had no other meaning than the idle courtship of an idle moment.

"Let me see you in this," he said, kissing her cheek lightly.

She bloomed under his touch as a rose, ready to unfold, might respond to the warmth of a careless finger, everything forgotten in the joy of his approval.

She returned after a while, clothed like a *débutante* in films of white with now and then a silvery scintillation as she moved. She was holding the jewel-box in her hand and together they selected a collar of pearls. She had not ventured to make a suggestion, but breathed a sigh of relief at his choice. She hated conspicuous gems; they made her feel so insignificant. If she had followed her caprices, she would have worn only flowers.

He turned over the mass of jewels while he told her the story of the diamond necklace he had last sent her; how an English peer had been driven to dispose of the wonderful heirloom, whose history had been written in the lives of court beauties and princely donors.

Edith listened, half amused, half touched by the story while she turned this way and that to study the effect of a new coiffure.

"Where is it?" he asked at length, abruptly.

Edith looked up, startled, from her problem.

"It? What?" Then the remembrance of the necklace and Betty came together.

"I wish you could see it on Betty," she exclaimed, with generous enthusiasm. "It suits her so much better than me. I am simply overpowered."

"Let me see for myself," was the only response, and she read in his tone her friend's insignificance.

"It will be all right later on," she thought amiably. It was better, perhaps, that Betty was not there in these first sweet days of reunion; next week—there was plenty of time. Possibly she had gone away on purpose. It was a gracious act.

She called Clarisse and gave the order to get the necklace from the safe, and while she was gone they chatted together lightly, he secretly rejoicing that her friend's name seemed to evoke no new and irritating sense of obligation.

He admired her gown, for even to his inexperienced eye it possessed an air of correctness and elegance not to be mistaken. The milky pearls, worth a duke's ransom, rested on her slender throat with no suggestion of weight and fettering, as if they had been placed there to harmonize with the tint of her translucent flesh.

Every hour she was a continual surprise to him. He had left her a few months ago, pleading and forlorn. Her tear-stained face had often come into his daily routine and vexed him with its pallor and patience. Now she was gay and coquettish, showing off little artificial airs and graces for his allurements. He wondered if it was the companionship of her own sex that had done this, for if so, under the patronage and companionship of a woman like Mrs. Van Diemer and her friends she would surely expand still more, her delicate beauty gain added charms, her manner the finer shades which mark social sophistication.

Clarisse handed the packet to her and commenced to hang the gowns in their scented bags.

Edith fumed with the fastenings. "My fingers are all thumbs," she said,

and she handed the box to her husband to unfasten.

She turned to give Clarisse some further direction; when she looked at him again he was gazing into an empty box.

He showed it to her without a word, but the angry cords stood on his brow and she shrank from him like a child dreading punishment; she had not seen that look for—oh, so long.

"It is gone?" she gasped. "Why, it cannot be! I kept it in that separate packet, for I thought it was safer than with the rest which go back and forth so often. I recall it all, now. Betty told me to do that. You remember the night, Clarisse, the night I tried it on for her, and—" a sudden thought flashing into her mind—"why, yes, Mr. Hayes was here, too."

Clarisse added some forgotten items of information.

"You sent it back to the office by him, madame."

She described the scene with an abandon of manner and voice.

"You did not want to trouble him; he insist. You recollect how I, I who am under suspicion until they are discover, I gave them to him. You saw me do it. He take them and disappear. He was gone a long time; you probably did not notice, for you talk much with Mrs. Hayes. When he return he and Mrs. Hayes go right away. I understand, madame, that they have not been here since—that they have gone entirely—decamp. *Voilà!*"

"Clarisse, hush! How dare you?"

She waited for her husband to approve her indignation toward the voluble Clarisse, who frequently forgot her place.

Something in his face frightened her.

"Fred, what is it? Tell me, dear. You can't think——"

Her face paled. She looked as if she would fall.

His mind worked with its accustomed clearness facing a crisis.

He must not have her agitated. It would not do to have her appear at this seemingly informal dinner, toward which he had worked so persistently,

with a heavy heart and heavy eyes, distraught, desolate, grieving the infidelity of a friend.

He shrugged his shoulders as if the incident were in the category of spilt-milk episodes.

"I was annoyed for a moment, but it is sure to come out all right. Some rascally hotel thief has taken it. They are as clever as the devil. Don't worry. I will go to the manager at once and set the wheels moving."

The color came back to her cheeks at the lightness of his tone.

On his way he gave a warning word to Clarisse. On no account was she to be upset by any suspicion of the truth that might be.

Clarisse, after her momentary reversion to type, was discretion itself. As she continued hanging the gowns she told of other incidents of lost jewels in her experience and reiterated how they had always been recovered from some clever cracksman who had overreached himself finally in disposing of his booty.

Edith's fear was lost in the stream of commonplace talk. After all, it was not the jewels she cared for; she hated jewels and she had so many, but she did not want to suffer again from the look of disapproval on her husband's face.

Frederick Worth walked slowly downstairs to the office. He wanted to think clearly. He believed he read the mystery aright. His wife had been the dupe of her so-called friends. The diamonds were almost priceless; on their proceeds a man and wife could live in luxury their entire life.

Betty had been the real thief, the husband but the accomplice. They had waited for such an opportunity, something big enough to make it worth while. It was like deceiving a child to take advantage of Edith, and that knowledge made his judgment more implacable. He would leave no stone unturned to find them. He would hound them to the limits of a pitiless law. They should pay the utmost penalty.

Faugh! There was a bad taste in his mouth. His wife for months in intimate association with a creature like that! He recalled her as Edith had painted her, handsome, showy, good-natured, attentive. He knew well the type of feminine vampires who feed on the largess of their friends and give superficial returns of high spirits and fawning slavishness.

He recalled William Hayes, and his meager memories showed him a man of frugal attainments but of abundant honesty. Ah, but life can corrode the most rockbound character! He knew that well. He had seen many a man whose honesty was his only capital sacrifice it at the lever of temptation.

When he returned to Edith he told her nothing of his suspicions and the means he had taken to prove them. Driven into a corner by her persistent questions he said carelessly:

"Oh, there will be no difficulty in recovering it. But if we should fail, it is but the debit and credit of life. It was not your fault. Hotel safes are like papier-mâché boxes to the expert."

The home of Mrs. Van Diemer was a symbol of the life of a woman to whom culture and time are instruments of service. It offered no nail for the most tired criticism to hang itself upon.

She greeted Edith as a woman who was to be her friend, preserving with fine tact the distinction between an artificial cordiality and restraint. She took her about and showed her nooks and corners of her own designing and was honestly amused at the childish raptures, for there is always a point where the simplicity of art and that of Nature amicably meet.

In the Louis XIV apartment Edith stood enraptured by the gilt prettinesses. It was a tiring-room in which to arrange life's coquetties, and her fitness for the frame was apparent.

"You will come and stay in it the next time you are left alone," said Mrs. Van Diemer. It was the first time she had yielded to impulse for many years.

To be taken up by her was the dream of social aspirants. Edith had, how-

ever, been kept in ignorance of its significance. She accepted the invitation easily, as she would have given it, and bestowed a careless caress on the older woman, who understood and appreciated the innocence of her act.

It was in the same spirit that she faced the cabal of fashionable women, no one of whom had hesitated to accept the invitation, knowing that they were to meet one of the most famous financiers of the day and his pretty wife, for whose social success it was rumored a tidal wave of ruin had been averted. To her they were merely friends of a woman who had been friendly to her. Her husband wanted her to know them, that they should like her, and she chattered gaily with an appealing manner that charmed in spite of preconceived prejudice. The relaxation of austerity was made easier by the knowledge that there were probably other plums to be shaken when they were a bit riper.

At the dinner Frederick Worth sat at Mrs. Van Diemer's right hand. They had long since recognized the potency of each other's character. He moved forward diplomatically now, as he would have moved the bishop in a game of chess, zigzagging through the sophistries of conversation, and her own moves were correspondingly clever. No man had a right to keep his millions from circulation. . . . There were thousands of men and women to whom the entrance of a man and woman into society meant work and life—the classes who attack the capitalist while they earn their bread and butter by his help; the natural ambitions, the boyhood dreams which are insistent until satisfied, the dreams that turn to signposts on the road of progress.

Then she spoke:

"We are all self-seekers. We prate of the vision and the ambition, but *au fond* is the germ of gain. The philanthropist loves to read of his good works, the millionaire and the politician to feel the weight of their hands on the pulleys, the social leader to know that her smile means success, that her frown

can take from beauty itself the luster. Fancies to a woman like me are impossible unless firmly based. Let us talk with our masks off! These fancies are ephemeral, butterfly-like, for every day I meet novices who allure with some special magnet. I have no time nor inclination to be hampered by mere possibilities."

Their eyes met and Frederick Worth nodded assent to the implied question. In the look she read not only the assured safety of her husband's future, but a generous percentage of the box receipts when the social drama should be fairly under way.

As she leaned back in the carriage Edith carried with her the picture of a beautiful room, enframing lovely women; she seemed still to hear the soft music, the gay voices and gayer laughter. With a woman's telepathic sense she realized that she had been a success and went far in her mental ramblings. To be a success meant keeping her husband near her, bridging forever the chasm of diverse interests that had separated them so long. She coiled herself in his outstretched arm and fell asleep. She did not wake until the wheels rumbled under the porte-cochère and then started up, with half-conscious words on her lips.

"Betty! Betty! Where is Betty?"

Her husband soothed her, and then, tired, happy, and yet half guilty at the thought of her forgetfulness, she put herself into the hands of Clarisse.

VIII

BETTY yawned herself across the room. The novelty of Atlantic City was beginning to pall upon her, handicapped as she was by her husband's presence. She was irritated, too, by the fact that they were staying at one of the cheaper hotels while the excellence of the others reminded her continually that if she and Edith were but together such a banal happening could not have annoyed her.

Well, they would come later with all their pretty gowns and airs of conse-

quence. They would stay at the best hotel and have the finest rooms to be procured for money—Edith's money. They would enjoy long days of blissful, relaxing sea-air which gives new life and strength after the Winter's exactions. She planned it all, planned, too, how they would make desirable acquaintances, an easier matter here than in a New York hotel where touch-me-not is the sign manual. With her ready observation she had noted two fashionably gowned, well-groomed women make tentative attempts at each other's acquaintance, to find, when it was finally accomplished, that they had many mutual interests.

What could she do for herself hampered by the escort of a commonplace, vulgarly attired husband, whose clothes were walking advertisements of a ready-made shop, and whose general appearance classed them immediately in the hopeless mediocre, the middle-class, in ambitions, breeding and experience.

These hours had made the chasm of separation of incalculable depth. She awaited impatiently the moment of farewell.

In her own reading of the change in her sentiment toward him she believed that she had developed while he had stood still, stock, stolidly still. It was a frequent happening among those tied together in youth before maturity had outlined the mental limitations.

Development with her meant neither an intellectual nor a spiritual change, although she credited herself with both. It was merely a supersensitiveness to conditions, a dislike to work and an inordinate love of luxury. It is the definition understood by many women who believe that their contempt for the necessary materialism of life constitutes a soul tuned only to the finer harmonies.

She could not read the silence of her husband's attitude except as vanity helped. He had begged her to come away with him from familiar surroundings so that they might, without the harassment of the sight of the known environment settle forever the ques-

tion of their future, a serious one for him and for her, too, so far as that went. One could not break lifelong ties in a moment without some regret and some necessary formalities.

But since their arrival he had shown no desire for the finalities. It must be, she argued, that he realized how useless an argument would be, how word-wasting any explanation. It was that he hated to lose one moment of her society and was adopting the policy of drifting to prolong their last moments together.

A man should be strong, decisive in his viewpoints, not a leaf drifting here and there on the by-paths of life, blown by every wind. What a man her friend had for a husband—so sure of himself that even in his neglect there was no petty acknowledgment of shortcomings. He did not accuse himself by excusing.

She was penniless. She would have to ask him for money in order to leave him, and she hesitated. She hated to put herself in the light of a suppliant, and, if he should refuse—

Edith would surely send her the cheque for her expenses. Why did she not answer the letters? Surely one of them must have reached her.

She pictured her friend wrapped in moments of ecstatic reunion, forgetting everybody and everything but the husband at last alive to his duties; forgiving, forgetful, passionately alive to his presence, coldly forgetful of the absence of others. She felt more than a little resentful. To be so soon forgotten after all the vows of lifelong devotion—was there nothing stable, nothing sure in life? How hard it was to be poor, to be at the mercy of friend and foe, to have no standpoints of one's own. She could not even resent indifference as she might do if their circumstances were parallel in importance.

It might be that Edith's husband was the cause of this inexplicable silence and Edith ashamed to confess it. What should she do in case this were true? She went over the ground she had already traveled, the many

milestones of his possible objections.

So, she could not break with her husband until she knew what this silence, this forgetfulness meant. She could not risk falling to the ground between the two stools of friendship and duty. She had told him once ironically that she was quite capable of taking care of herself as well as he took care of her, but she knew the statement was made in the heat of anger, without foundation of fact. One does not become self-supporting at the wish.

She watched her husband furtively as her thoughts wandered in these channels. He had lost his attitude of phlegmatic indifference; he made gestures of nervous excitement; he watched her and the door by turns; he walked up and down in an agitated manner.

She believed him waiting in anguish for the letter or telegram announcing her freedom.

There was one other awaiting the crisis in their affairs with equal interest. This was Miss Pigott.

Miss Pigott had always known something of this kind would happen. She assisted the detective sent there to worm out confidences by every means in her power.

Betty was the culprit, she was sure; she would stake her immortal soul upon it. The husband was merely weak and infatuated.

The woman—as she termed Betty—was capable of anything; theft was the least of her misdemeanors. If she willed she could tell, but what was the use? There was a higher law and she had no absolute evidence. Betty was sly, clever, not to be caught red-handed in evil-doing—that tribute she would pay her.

Her thin fingers locked themselves together under her apron when she learned that the prison doors were yawning a welcome for the runaways. She felt a moment's pity for the husband; he was merely a tool, a poor weakling. However, a man should suffer for a wicked infatuation.

She remembered how often Betty had spoken of her friend's jewels; that fact alone showed that she was brooding over them, else why should she have them so continually on her mind? She remembered, too, that Mr. Hayes had spoken the word "Philadelphia" the night of the hurried flight. She regretted she had no other clues.

She saw the detective depart with a feeling half fearful, half delight. Suppose they had really escaped and in some other country, Europe, for instance, should live a life of ease on the ill-gotten gains? She recalled how they once talked together about that country of adventurous ne'er-do-wells, and Betty had expressed a longing to see it.

She went to the lonely basement wondering if justice, in spite of her efforts, would be balked after all, and slept restlessly.

The fact that William Hayes registered under his own name in Philadelphia made Miss Pigott's clue an easy one to follow.

The detective grunted with disgust.

"Green hand. Easy job for me. Wish there were more like him, but, Lord, what a fool with that swag."

A second thought came to change his conclusion.

After all, there was certain astuteness in this open dealing. If they had attempted to fly from the country, that act in itself would have condemned. If they had registered under an assumed name, there would be the same suspicion; as it was, unless the goods were found on them, or their sale or loan traced to them, who could prove their guilt? It is true that the jewels were last in the possession of the "suspect," but it was his habit and that of his wife to deposit like articles in the hotel safe, and a careful examination of the remainder had failed to disclose any other loss. Suppose they had hidden the plunder and assumed the attitude of innocent and outraged people enjoying a vacation in a perfectly rational, commonplace manner, who could convict them on the shallow evidence at hand? The

situation was, after all, not so simple as it looked on the surface. It remained for him to take a bold stand. It was the only way to convict them.

Atlantic City, with its many hotels, offered opportunity for the loss of considerable time in tracing the fugitives. but persistency had its reward and in a few hours after his arrival the detective had the satisfaction of knowing that he had, in his vernacular, caged his birds.

It was the moment when Betty, tired, distrait, slowly walked across the room to rearrange the hats in her trunk so that if she should wish to catch a train suddenly, there would be no loss of time in packing.

She was tired now of the boardwalk, tired of the endless crowds, tired of everything. She did not wish to leave her room for fear a telegram with an imperative summons might come and she not be there to receive it. Her husband, too, seemed to prefer the seclusion of the room to the more inviting writing or smoking-rooms, and lounged about with furrowed brow, watching through the window the long line of foam on the crest of the breakers as the east wind drove them shoreward.

There was a tap at the door and Betty flew to open it. She had not rung; it must be a telegram or a letter.

Instinctively she put out her hand to the man who stood there, then withdrew it as, without waiting for an invitation, he stepped inside the room.

"You are Mr. Hayes?" His eyes, overlooking Betty's shoulder, interrogated the man beyond who stood, white and trembling, in his line of vision.

"I am."

"And she," pointing to the wide-eyed, astonished Betty, "is your wife?"

"She is."

"You know Mr. Worth—Mr. Frederick Worth, of the Waldorf-Astoria, the great millionaire, I believe?"

"Slightly. We were boys together—that is all." The answer was hardly articulate and the detective turned to Betty.

"You are an intimate friend of his wife?"

"Certainly I am. We are like sisters. What has happened? Did they send you for me?"

"Not exactly—at least." The detective hurried over the usual shibboleth of his trade. "I am sorry to be obliged—the unpleasant necessities of a business like this where innocent people are often mistaken for the guilty—no doubt there has been a mistake, but even you will feel better when——"

Betty scarcely heard him. Something was wrong; what was it? She could not understand. Why did the man stand there muttering, mouthing his words? Why was her husband's face so ghastly and why did his hands shake as they stroked his mustache?

The detective pulled a search-warrant from his pocket.

"We are looking for a diamond necklace which is missing from the safe at the Waldorf-Astoria and which belongs to Mrs. Worth. It was last seen in your possession and after your mysterious disappearance it was thought—it might be possible——"

Betty's cheeks flamed with a wave of indignant red.

"I will never believe that Edith could be like that, so cruel as to suspect me. It is some trick of her husband's."

She glanced at her own husband for sympathy, as she had been accustomed to do in the far-away past when perplexities arose. He avoided her eye and looked again through the window at the twisted breakers, foam-crested.

The detective noticed the avoidance and made a mental note. "Guilty. Now for a bluff."

"It will surely do no harm," he said suavely. "If there has been a mistake, no one is hurt."

Betty moved her arm indignantly. "Search the room and get over with it. Search me. Search everything. We are helpless," and the hot waves of color dyed her cheeks with inalterable shame.

After a minute she fell into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

She saw in a second the collapse of her tower of pride. This was an insult to resent at which the most abject would regain a lost self-respect. Nothing could atone for it, nothing explain it.

It is true that the necklace was last in the possession of her husband, but to suspect that this incident and their departure argued guilt—what change must have ensued in Edith's thought toward her!

The detective, accepting her permission, was going about his work methodically. Her husband remained in the same attitude of rigidity. She withdrew her hands from her face and clasped them about her knees.

The whole future seemed to stretch before her, the dreary monotony of days and nights from which she could not flee, the constant call of her soul for the luxuries of the past amid the banalities of the present, the loss of all that she believed made existence worth while to a woman young, beautiful, ambitious.

Yet the true significance of the situation did not penetrate her consciousness. She was simply astounded at the suspicion, so soon to be disproved, and even in the moment of abasement she sounded lower depths in trying to evolve some way of excusing her friend's treachery.

It is true that she had taken money, clothes, jewels; she had taken them, however, as a sister might from one more fortunate. Edith felt this; she had often expressed the thought in nearly those identical words. She remembered how she had made faint remonstrances in the early days of their renewed intimacy and they had been promptly overcome by Edith's unflagging generosity, her desire to do for her continually, to place her on a par in every financial way. Now, she had turned against her. Why was it? She was a slave to her husband's autocratic demands, it is true, but even a slave has some fidelity, and had Edith none?

She was aroused by a significant exclamation.

She raised her head from its drooping pose, and her husband turned at the same moment from his contemplation of the landscape and the boundary line of surf.

The detective in one hand held her opened traveling-bag; in the other a line of flame wavered, scintillated wickedly in his blunt fingers; on the floor a heap of handkerchiefs, which had loosely covered the necklace, had fallen in a little discolored heap.

Betty's face assumed a horrified, wondering expression. Her voice was raucous as she gasped:

"What? Here?" She recoiled in stupid wonder. "How could it be here?"

She rose from her chair and advanced toward the detective. She was now in a paroxysm of blinding rage. She shook him frantically by the sleeve.

"How dared you put it there? You brought it with you. There is some plot." And then, suddenly, her eyes, seeking for help again, met her husband's, and in a second the reading of the tragedy was made clear.

She realized in that omniscient flash of comprehension the true reason for the hurried midnight trip. She understood the lack of farewell, the incomplete preparations; she even remembered her husband's slow walk to the letter-box after he had dropped her note in his pocket. Of course he had substituted another letter and her first had met with a similar fate. She had played unwittingly into his hand. She had enmeshed herself in a web of circumstance from which she saw no escape.

She could have told her story to Edith alone, but to Edith with a husband strange, cynical, without mercy or pity, believing them in collusion to take advantage of his wife's trust in them, would she be able to convince him? Would she have the courage to try?

It was the husband, not Edith, who had put the detective on their trail. It was the husband who might put

them in prison—common criminals. She could even see, in this moment of vision, the hated face of Miss Pigott, smug, satisfied at the discomfiture of the woman she had so envied.

This picture was the last straw.

She stepped toward her husband, an expression of implacable hate on her face. She looked him full in the face with cold, glittering eyes of steel.

"You did it! You wanted to ruin me. I see it all. I hate and loathe you with all my heart and soul! Coward!"

IX

THE second step in the social climb took place a few days later, its preliminaries having been under way before Mrs. Van Diemer's dinner. Given ostensibly to his coworkers in an enterprise which would, later, electrify the financial magnates of two continents, the reason for the function was hidden in the plan which had brought Frederick Worth to New York, had made Mrs. Van Diemer his coadjutor and had for marks to punctuate its length a Fifth avenue mansion, an ocean yacht, a Newport villa, a presentation at court and other baubles of that kind.

Like Napoleon the First establishing an unwilling circle at the Tuileries, the modern Napoleon of the stock market marshaled the curious, the ambitious, the fearful to his aid in establishing his social credit.

Every woman present who had come at command of husband or father had special claim in her own right to be there. She was either very clever, very beautiful or very rich. Her appearance was a unit carefully computed in the success which would the next day be talked of in hundreds of fashionable homes and by thousands of mediocre people whose acquaintance with society is gleaned through the press and the gossip of hirelings.

Frederick Worth relegated to his associate the finer questions whose complexities are hidden in the feline

natures of women who accept and scoff, come when bidden and go away with a laugh not too well hidden in an imaginary sleeve. He depended on her to add dignity and seriousness, to press a thumb on a social sore when necessary, to appeal to vanity, to suggest to the indifferent a possible antidote to boredom. She performed her part admirably and did it as she would not have believed it possible a short time before, with a feeling of personal loyalty and respect for the end in view.

He had determined to begin garishly, preferring ostentation to mediocrity. He gave orders that there was to be no restraint to the expenditure and felt a keen regret when he discovered that while there may be no end to the wherewithal, there is a limit to the uses to which it may be put on such an occasion.

The suite of rooms was turned into a floral bower. Priceless orchids whose history is written in far-off jungles and whose beauty, menacing and fearful, seems to speak of the lives lost in their capture, covered the walls; roses, jessamine, myosotis, added their fragrance and colorful grace to corner and corridor. Bowers of green, as if the up-pouring water of a fountain had turned suddenly, by fairylike charm, to arboreal permanence, hid swarthy-skinned musicians, whose red jackets and gilt-trimmed caps glowed like cactuses through the interstices. A prima donna, whose fabulous price was to be paid before she would deign to appear and each of whose flute-like notes was balanced by a gold piece, would follow the dinner, details of which were written in the steward's book as the *summum bonum* of matters gastronomic. Favors that might lurk unchallenged in the jewel caskets of royalty were the reason, possibly, why many a head which might otherwise have ached at the last moment, many a heart that might have palpitated an excuse, were present with only the lateness that insolence pays to aspiration.

Yet the machinery of the great hotel was not overweighted by the event.

Thousands dined there on the same night in the public rooms, sipped their liqueurs in café and palm garden, strolled aimlessly up and down the peacock walk, listened to the music, flirted in the corridors, unknowing that overhead a feast that would have shamed Caligula's magnificence, that would have made the Roman banquet with its showers of falling leaves through an unpaneled ceiling, its nightingales' tongues cooked in the heart of an afterward despised bullock, ortolans fattened in an emperor's pleasaunce, seem cheap and crude in comparison.

Edith spent most of the day preceding the weighty hours under perfumed coverlids, reading, dreaming, resting. Occasionally Clarisse stole in to ask a hushed question and stole away again fearful of marring her face by a tiny wrinkle of discomfiture. Her husband lunched with her, refusing to let her rise and bringing her delicacies as if she were an invalid and he a nurse anxious to spare her unnecessary fatigue. He looked at the cards that had been left with her and read the half-dozen invitations selected from a mass of mediocrity by Mrs. Van Diemer's assistance.

She looked forward to the evening with lively anticipations, emphasized by the stored-up vitality which she had not been allowed to expend in the usual delicate exercising. In her musings she returned, with the persistence of the fragile-natured to its few determinations, to the resolves made in regard to her social advance. She recalled the seemingly idle observation of her husband that it is in the favor of women, not men, that popularity must be won, and she adopted its significance as a rule of conduct. She would study these complex creatures, give of the largess of her nature and means to their entertainment and in their approval win the only meed she cared for.

The thought of Betty obtruded again and again, ever to be gently placed aside as one might lift a book that had interested, sure that it would interest again, but that for the moment

has lost its charm. She was not conscious of any infidelity in this attitude of mind. Her whole past life seemed to have been washed away, as even from a Summer sea a wave of unexpected height may roll in to sweep aside the structure of sand and shell, built by happy fingers on a sunny beach.

Late in the afternoon she put herself in the hands of Clarisse to be massaged, manicured, coiffured, made fresh and fragrant as the flowers that bloomed in the artificial Arcadia where she would receive her guests.

She remained faithful to the choice of gowns made when Betty and she had first read from her husband's letter of the intended banquet. As she approved the jeweled aigrette in her fluffy hair and the opal pendant about her throat she was secretly pleased that the wonderful necklace had not been found. She knew that she would have been overpowered by it, while the few jewels she had selected emphasized without detracting from her value.

Her husband did not share in this satisfaction. The rose-pink gown he admired, but at the sight of the gems so inferior to those he had intended her to wear a fresh wave of bitterness swept over him at the thought of the culprits. Even as he looked at her he was crushing a telegram in his hand which announced their capture and knew the impossibility of their arriving in time for the booty to be added to the general magnificence of the affair.

But having approved her with a diplomatic word that showed his interest in the merest detail of her toilette, he put the unpleasant thought of the coming hour when punishment was to be frankly meted out from his mind. He would not spoil one moment of the success he had worked for with this trivial happening.

He drew his wife to him suddenly and kissed her, not as he had been accustomed to kiss her of late, tenderly, fraternally, but with a sudden thrill of bygone sentiment. When he released her she flew away to get her gloves and fan. Something made her gasp—an

inexplicable feeling made up of passion and dismay.

How would she fit Betty into the life opening before her where every day she and her husband were drawing closer together and where, in the nature of things, a third person must necessarily be out of place? Nothing had been said of his leaving; little careless words dropped now and then made her believe a separation of no immediate nearness.

What did she owe Betty? Why did she not miss her more? Why was the idea of her return, husbandless, futureless, dependent on her companionship and affection, a thought to be thrust aside, as she had been thrusting it aside for days?

She realized in the revelation of her husband's kiss that the old friendship was worn out and could not be refurbished. The mere thought of a third in the too short days of the future was an agony so great that, not carelessly this time, but with unaccustomed firmness, she closed the door of her mind to the memory, determined that she would not allow it to obtrude for that evening at least. Tomorrow—but tomorrow was a long way off; there were pleasant hours intervening.

The banquet rolled through its courses harmoniously as the music, which, languid, capricious, voluptuous, lent its aid to the harmony of the scene. There was not a false note in the gamut of either. Criticism might come with the next morning's coffee, but for the hour it was quelled by a greater force of sensuous appeal, guided by an ascetic brain, to the undoing of contemptuous regard. Vanity and selfishness, the dominant notes in the composition of life, were struck squarely by a master hand.

In the inertia of the after-dinner mood, the men smoked and drank liqueurs so priceless that they are not even named in importers' lists, while in the salon the women languidly conversed and approved one another with half-closed eyes. Neapolitan barcarolles prevented speech or as-

sisted it, according to temperament.

Suddenly Mrs. Van Diemer, ever alert, noted in a loop of overhanging green the face of a man, cautious, close-lipped, cunning. She placed him immediately as far removed from the servants of the feast as from the guests. In trying to classify him, she recalled all at once the story of the lost necklace, for Worth had told her about it and a second glance showed her a look of triumph, mingled with uncertainty, that confirmed her opinion. She looked hurriedly over her shoulder. Edith was leaning forward, her small face alive with interest, chatting to the wife of a multi-millionaire who had exchanged birthright for goldright and shared her husband's one ambition to add an Ossa of more wealth to the Pelion already possessed. She seemed amused at the delicate wit displayed for her approval while she was in reality cataloguing the Worths as means to this end. There was no sound from the dining-room, and the rest of the party was indifferent and apparently well content.

She must act quickly. It would not do to mar the serenity of the scene by anything so crude as the intrusion of a theft. The world that in its financial transactions may steal millions must, in the hours of ease, be protected from the shudder that comes with a knowledge of petty baseness. These were tenets of her lifelong creed.

She screened the detective's figure with her own, as she stood at the entrance. A careless observer might think her seeking for the cooler air of the corridor.

"You have the necklace? Good!"

She put out her hand and the detective, after a moment's delay, yielded to the command of eye and voice.

In spite of her training she could not help an exclamation as the stones flamed in her palm. She looked backward again, but fortune favored her.

"The man and woman—where are they?"

She, like Frederick Worth, wished to

guard Edith as long as possible from the information.

He pointed a thumb toward the dressing-rooms which connected with the banquet suite and then with the private rooms of the Worths.

"You stay there and we will come as soon as the guests depart."

Again he hesitated and again the compelling eye, used to obedience from hirelings, forced him to act at the spoken word.

Stealthily as he had approached he disappeared, and Mrs. Van Diemer moved languidly within, just as the men entered from the dining-room and an open door in a bower of drooping roses slid back to reveal the prima donna, for whose songs satiety had paid the meed of patience.

Meantime Betty sat forlornly on the *chaise longue* in the Worths' salon, whose opened door showed glimpses of the dressing-room set aside for the guests. During the evening women came to rearrange loosened draperies, to rest a moment, to perfume themselves with powder and scent.

Always keenly alive to the significance of dress, the shabby attire which she had deliberately chosen for its lack of style and to which was added the dust and dishevelment of travel, marked as nothing else could to her the change in her circumstances.

Clarisse had always hated her for the plums of patronage that, once coming her way, had been diverted toward the greater claim of friendship. Beneath the attentions she had been obliged to pay was always the half-concealed distaste. She greeted her now with an assumption of superiority and thinly veiled contempt. She offered her no hospitality and pretended not to hear the faint request for a glass of water until the husband's voice forced her to the service. She made but one remark, in which the sting was as visible as her triumph.

"Since Madame Worth has gone so much into society, she has improved, ah, *très* mooch."

Occasionally Betty could see the man on guard—for fear of what?—

their escape or their further crime? She felt the touch of iron in her soul as she noted his shuffling gait. Now and then a strain of music broke the silence; the rustle of chiffons and silks, the perfume of flowers abundantly placed in the dressing-room assailed her senses, keenly irritated by the inimical mood.

She could not sleep, but after a while a sort of numbness settled upon her. She saw, as in a phantasmagoria, the figure of her husband tramping back and forth with furrowed brow and staccato step from room to room; the twists of Clarisse's shoulders as she undulated to and fro in the fawning flatteries of the servile nature; dim lights swam before her and the heavy atmosphere settled like something tangible upon her spirit.

How long she was in this state she did not know, but suddenly she was aroused. The doors of the salon had been closed and the lights, innumerable reflected in mirrors and windows, were turned to their utmost capacity. By her side her husband was standing and she felt something protective in his attitude. In front of her was Edith, pale, distracted, whose impulse of approach had been restrained by the firm hand of a stern-faced man in whose eyes was neither pity nor hope; on her other side a woman who leaned toward her as an elder sister might have done, watched half tenderly, half firmly as if ready to help her husband in preventing an inept action. A weak-faced man leaned against the mantelpiece, and in the window embrasure another woman, toward whom the older offered occasional looks of apology as if for an undesired detention, completed the party.

Again the bitterness of an outraged innocence filled her soul. She was not even to be spared the indifference and cruelty of a stranger's glance on the festering sore of humiliation. She shook herself wearily into fuller consciousness, with the inarticulate exclamation, "What matters anything now?"

Frederick Worth placed his wife's hand in that of Mrs. Van Diemer and

stepped toward William Hayes. His "Well, sir?" struck sharply into the silence.

To every man his moment.

The moment which separates permanent mediocrity from temporary greatness had come to William Hayes. He stepped forward, too, and gave back scorn for scorn, contempt for contempt, fearlessness for fearlessness. The battle that was to be fought was to be fought between them and his indifference to the others' presence was not feigned.

"I'm guilty, yes; but not in the way you think."

The door was opened suddenly, the detective stepped inside, and as he closed it the sound of a released string from the guitar of a musician was heard. Edith shivered at the sound.

"I expected to tell you this story alone—man to man—but it doesn't matter. When one's fighting for his honor the world doesn't count much."

"His honor!" The lips of Frederick Worth formed the words skeptically.

"Yes, his honor. I've knocked about the world a good deal, and so have you. I can tell when a man's lying—so can you."

There was a slight uplifting of attention in the group. The young woman lost her expression of impatience, the man at the mantel straightened his shoulders and watched Betty with an anxious admiration. Betty's eyes never wandered from her husband's face.

"I took the necklace and hid it in my wife's bag, where a fool could have found it. It was a sudden temptation, and I yielded to it. I wanted to separate her from your wife, and I saw in this wild scheme a way to accomplish that wish."

There was no faltering in his glance, but Frederick Worth shifted from one foot to the other. Edith had collapsed utterly and was supported in Mrs. Van Diemer's arms. The young woman crept from the window and stood back of Edith's chair, and a sympathetic cough came from the detective.

"I hoped that we would be sus-

pected. I wanted to be followed and found with the stolen goods in our possession. I believed that when that occurred we would both be turned adrift with such contempt that there would be no future meeting, no explanation until—until all danger of a further intimacy between the two women was past. Contempt isn't easy to bear, but I preferred it to—the other.

"I planned the thing and my plan went wrong. I never thought to face a prison cell, but why I should be such a fool as not to expect it I can't see now. Then I was crazed, despairing, reckless. It's in those moments that the man who's been temperate all his life gets drunk, the honest man becomes a thief. I lost all power to reason. I felt that I'd got to do something big, something decisive, and this was the only means to that end."

Great beads of perspiration ran down his cheeks. His mouth twitched painfully, and his voice came in gasps, labored and raw.

The young woman who had never been known to notice anyone who had not a line of carefully registered ancestry did not attempt to hide her emotion. Edith sobbed aloud and her husband quivered at the sound.

He spoke curtly.

"You depended on my wife's favor to shield you?"

"She owed me something. Until she came into our lives we were happy. She led my wife away from her simple life into luxury and idleness. She made her expensive presents, gave her clothes beyond her means, destroyed little by little her self-respect. Finally she connived at her determination to leave me because I—was poor.

"When I came back to her she was no longer glad to see me; when I went away she was indifferent. From being her friend as well as her husband I was all at once an intruder. I was made to feel my lacks in a thousand ways. I was thrust aside and made ashamed of being commonplace. I blushed for my education, for my business. I was compared continually by the two, your

wife and mine, with those who had greater opportunity.

"I acted the scoundrel. I stole as a common thief steals, but before God I say that I stole to profit by the disclosure, not by my greed. I stole to find my honor, not to lose it.

"I had planned to take her away that night, and made all my preparations beforehand. They told me you were on your way, and when I took the necklace from the box and put it in my pocket I saw in your presence a help to the scheme I worked out suddenly in my distorted mind.

"Then one act led to others. I had to intercept letters, to play the criminal—I, an honest man who had been able to look every man and woman in the face!

"If intention makes the thief, I am not one. Now, do with me what you will, but you can't touch her," and he put out the menacing hand and arm of the primal man protecting his mate.

It took Frederick Worth but a moment to travel the salient points of the history as he had heard them from the detective. Everything he had learned tallied with this story. The moment passed; he stretched out his hand and grasped that of the other man with a strong, friendly grip.

The tension of the scene had been great. Edith felt a faintness creep over her. She made an attempt to rise and reach Betty, but Mrs. Van Diemer prevented with a scarcely perceptible motion. It was she who touched William Hayes significantly on the shoulder and whispered:

"Your wife looks ill. The fresh air may revive her."

He obeyed what was seemingly a courtesy, but was in reality a command.

"Come, Betty."

And Betty, wide-eyed, tear-stained, forlorn, did not resist.

The door closed behind them. A deep sigh of relief was heard and the eyes of Frederick Worth thanked Mrs. Van Diemer for the tact which had saved the situation from a banal and emotional excess.

The detective added his word as his fingers closed over a strip of paper: "I never did believe them folks guilty. They were the greenest ever, and the man's face was too honest for the job."

The reaction of tremendous feelings overwhelmed Betty anew. She felt callous, unmoved. What was a little more or less of sorrow when one has touched lips to the dregs? There was nothing left out of the fabric of her dreams but a few torn shreds. She was glad to get away, to hide in some solitude like a wounded, hunted animal.

"Where shall we go?" she asked, when they reached the sidewalk.

It was the first word she had spoken to her husband since the discovery of the necklace.

He took her hand and placed it in his arm with a masterful gesture. The crisis had restored his manliness. He had ceased to be the slave. He was restored to the position that society and the church had relegated to him when the words of their troth were legalized. He was the head of the family once more.

He felt curiously exultant. He was glad to have suffered as he had done. He could not have explained his mood, but he knew that he would not have changed the experiences of one moment he had recently lived.

He spoke as if there had been no break in their lives.

"I have only a little money. I guess we'd better go back to Pigott's."

Betty made no demur. Why should she, who had borne such a crushing burden, object to the trifle of bitterness?

He felt a pride in reinstating himself and wife in the eyes of the scornful landlady. He remembered her parting insults and knew how she had helped in their capture. She was doubtless dreaming of them, in a pleasurable spinster slumber, as already behind the bars.

They waited a long time while the clang of the bell rang through the house. Finally the withered face and bitter lips of Miss Pigott confronted them, the meager shape wrapped in a scant wrapper.

"My wife was not well at the seashore," William Hayes explained, "and we have once more changed our plans."

Greed and hate struggled for a moment; then, without a word, she went upstairs and opened the door of the room they had left, which she had not been able to let.

The gesture of tenderness as he helped his wife upstairs did not escape the landlady's notice, and when she went back to the darkness and the yelping dog she lay a long time, wondering as to the contrariety of fate.

X

ALL through the night Betty sat in a big chair by the window. Her husband did not weary her with remonstrance. He did not even smoke his pipe, fearful of annoying her with its penetrating odor. He took off his coat and shoes, threw himself on the bed and was silent. Whether he slept or not she did not know—did not care. Once he rose, came stealthily across the room and enveloped her in a blanket, which he tucked gently about her feet. She did not move, but breathed heavily as though she slumbered, so fearful was she that he might speak and she be obliged to answer.

Hour after hour passed in the darkness. Pictures of the past ran riotously through her brain, as if the power of control which keeps the hidden mechanism in order were broken. She saw clearly all the details in the life which had come in such persistence, that she had taken, enjoyed and hurried on to enjoy anew. Scraps of conversation, sentences in books returned. This was the price philosophers and cynics said had to be paid for every swerving from the path of duty. She had had no time nor inclination to argue the point before; if she had, she would have said that she was paying for it in the occasional prick of conscience at the return of her husband's face in her happiness, the tone of his voice, his attitude of abandonment to grief that she had wondered at. She had always supposed that this remorseful feeling was

the balancing of accounts with Fate. It would seem that one did not choose one's own punishment.

Her mind worked now with astonishing clearness, replacing the stupor which she had sunken into, as reaction to the hours of horror and grief. Each portrait in this mental picture-view stood out as, in a shadowed room, a jagged lightning flash reveals a hidden figure.

There was Edith's husband—the stern, uncompromising being who had as little resemblance to the callow youth of her girlhood acquaintance as had the environment in which she had just seen him to the country home where he had once played for her the rôle of awkward host. She remembered how he had been overpowered by her appearance and had taken refuge by the side of the pale, gentle girl in the corner—his young wife.

That wife—Edith—was like filtered water from which the vital principle has gone, but which is sweeter, clearer for the subtraction. Edith, from whom now she was separated by a deep gulf of opposing interests and needs, a gulf which she did not hide from herself had always been there, covered by the rootless shrubbery of mutual loneliness and temporary affinity.

She thought of the women in this new world whither her friend had withdrawn; she had unconsciously studied them in those agonized moments, noted their ease in the crudity of the scene, marked their aloofness from the women she had always known.

Edith had stepped forward into their world and she was left behind. Destiny had fitted her for it from the beginning, made her pliable, negative, weak, yet, if events had followed the path she had determined for them, she might have stood by her side in this ongoing, accepted first for her, later for herself. She would have fitted into this cloak of social wisdom as she had into that of luxury and adapted its lines and folds to her stronger, more aggressive personality—after a time.

But that was over now, over and done with. She remembered coming

into this very room one afternoon and crushing with a careless finger a cobweb that shone in the window casing, as if its threads were made of living gold. Why did this act start from the niches of memory to confront her? Was it the symbol of the life she had lost, that golden cobweb torn from the moorings of her wish, dispersed into nothingness by a careless touch of Fate?

The future—what was that to be?

What, indeed! She was not of the type of women who clutch at independence as a thread out of a labyrinth of despair. She had nothing of value to offer the world for its coin, which speaks in its very hardness of the lives crushed in its birth—in the mine, the mill, the mint, in the world of human struggle. She had no accomplishment, no training to offset its value nor was she young enough to replace inexperience with enthusiasm.

Her days of ease were over and she had now to retrace her steps over a barren road, the most difficult journey from the alpha of life's alphabet to its omega.

She was to begin again with a husband whom she did not love as she read love in Edith's passionate assertions, yet who, she admitted in the bareness of her self-betrayal, had made her respect him as she never had done before. By a method of madness, one which only an honest man would have been foolhardy enough to attempt, he had forced her to this state of dependence upon him, to this lonely chair and agonies of regret. She gave him his meed of praise grudgingly.

For she was not regenerated suddenly. She could not take up the old life where it was left before this episode of luxurious living came into it, which had aroused and developed every weakness in her nature. She knew that there was before her a succession of fog-colored days, bereft even of the simple pleasures she had once enjoyed. She was now to fight the seven devils that would merry-make in the room she had swept and garnished for their Satanic pleasure. She could name all these devils as they danced a tarantelle of

demoniac steps through her brain; there was the devil of satiety, the devil of sloth, the devil of irritation, the devil of envy—oh, what did it matter what they were named?

She turned in her chair restlessly and heard a faint sound from the bed, where one moved in sympathy with her inarticulate cry. The sound flayed the spirit that could not respond.

She could not even find in the situation a reason for praising her own abstinence from railing. Resignation, philosophy—what were they but the qualities of sensible people who see no good in beating their heads against a wall of fact, who are obliged to take what is offered or suffer more in the refusal. She was not resigned, she was not regenerated, she was simply—herself.

Then she had a vision. She was standing before a mirror of wonderful crystalline depths where she could study herself with punctilious care, note every defect, every weakness that Nature had already painted and those definitely promised. She could even see her soul, and felt the cheap tawdriness of a figure fitted to the apparel of another. Then she discovered that it was not a mirror that was before her, but herself, her real self, and the looker-on whom she thought herself. Where was she—where had she gone?

She awoke to find her husband standing at her side with a cup of hot coffee in his hand.

She straightened her stiffened limbs and accepted it with a word of thanks. When he touched her wan cheeks she responded almost gaily, and at the knowledge that the gaiety was not more than half-assumed she felt a little thrill of returning life.

When the trunks came she commenced to unpack, and soon the room was in its accustomed state of neatness. She stood once a long time with a picture of Edith in her hand. Should she give it its place on the mantel to be a constant reminder of the past, or should she destroy it now?

Her husband had gone out for the morning papers and had returned with

a bunch of street flowers that he put in a mug on the table. How homely they were and yet how sweet! She tore the picture from edge to edge and threw it aside, then buried her face in the cheap blooms, whose brave fragrance seemed to touch the wound of her spirit with a tender perfume.

Absorbed in these homely duties, she heard no sound from the outer world. The gentle tap on the door was responded to by her husband, and without warning Frederick Worth and his wife stepped inside the room.

They, too, had slept little and, aroused by each other's restlessness, had arisen and in the early morning hours had discussed the situation clearly and calmly; that is, Frederick Worth had stated his own convictions and his wife had acquiesced, with an ever new surprise that he had read her soul and mind so well.

Side by side with the success of the social début was in his mind the dissatisfaction against fundamental verities that a man feels when he faces another who has started with him, has been a failure in the eyes of the world and recognizes the truth that so easily their paths might have paralleled if events had only favored. Granted that his success has been due to certain sterling qualities and a chain of circumstance, certain other qualities equally sterling were the possession of the other man and they had led to no days of ease.

There are tollgates on the road of success where a traveler rests and admits that the ongoing has passed beyond his power—just as the downward path offers equal clearings. It is in these moments that humility mingles with the sweetness of life's largess.

And looking with Edith at the dawn through the high windows with their broad perspective, they realized how little their own significance counted in a world of mystery and vastness that was lightened by the first rays of the rising sun. Their only safety seemed to be in the simple rules of conduct that had in their early married life answered all possible problems.

And so, when the four stood facing one another in the lodging-house room, he came to the point bluntly, as was his manner when dealing with the outspoken, plain-dealing man.

"We can't end it this way," he said, with convincing seriousness; "we simply can't, that is all."

In his voice was the underlying knowledge of an injury done and a desire for restitution, and in his glance and the touch of his hand a remembrance of the old-time boyhood days, the friendship between the wives and the many threads of mutual memories.

Betty, after the first moment of surprise and resentment, had herself well in hand. She was wan and pale, but displayed a gentle dignity as rare as it was unexpected.

The feeling of revolt passed as quickly as it came, else had her night's vigil been in vain. To what profit a resentment that only eats within? Edith was on the crest of the wave, she in its hollow; wind and tide were bearing them far asunder. She was glad to part in this way; it removed some of the sting. The old friendship could be buried with decent conventions, and as the men's hands met the lips of the women touched gently, forgivingly.

The decision that Frederick Worth and his wife had come to, after many plans had been talked over and put aside, was that he should reestablish William Hayes in the country town where they had all been born and bred, and for which each of them felt the loyalty of the home-tie. He would buy back the business in which he had once failed and give him another chance. It was stated as a business proposition, pure and simple, and he voiced his belief that it would prove a good investment in money and faith. It was the one possible favor that William Hayes admitted to himself could be accepted. After a moment's hesitation, without a look at his wife, he gave an ultimatum of assent.

There are men who are born for cities, for the perplexing eddies of life, the turmoil of opposing interests and

footholds gained and kept only by racking efforts which rouse the blood to action, just as there are men whose energies are paralyzed by such an environment, losing power to focus ability, whose abilities are dissipated instead of concentrated. Frederick Worth was of the former class, William Hayes of the last named, and each man develops best in his own place.

Like the sunflower turning ever its disk to the rising sun, Edith would have been happy anywhere, for she was one of the rare souls to whom love is the breath of life, while Betty was misplaced, with beauty and ambition hampered not only by poverty, but by early training and natural impulse which prevented her seeking success in the illicit ways traversed by women of her physical and mental type. She had their unrest, but not their immorality and recklessness. Such women find their *métier* in the quiet home, far from the maddening persistence of greed and jealousy.

As the men talked and the women listened, Betty pictured with parted lips the garden she had loved, filled with Spring hopes and Summer fulfillments; the charming house brimming with hospitable intent, the phaeton in which she would drive down the shaded streets, bowing right and left to her acquaintances, a woman with an assured position, humble though it was, not a neglected unit among millions of her kind unable to step aside from the mass of mediocrity. Her hurts were healed at the mere thought. Life had flung her a compensating moment. She grasped it eagerly.

She had had her day, and there are few who have more. She would go back, strike her roots deep down, so deep that never again would they be torn from their place.

She stretched out her hands to Edith.

"I don't deserve it, but it's what I need. It will make me all over again."

It was her first word of abasement and her last, for she was not a woman given to penitence.

At the door there was a single second

of embarrassment. It was the time of farewell, not for the hour, the morning, the day, but forever. Each felt its significance. They had companioned and now they were to part. Some time in the future there would be a casual meeting, an hour for auld lang syne, a temporary tarrying, but the great divide which comes when the routine of intimate life together is no more had its map-line marked plainly away from the shabby room.

There was a flicker of sentiment. A flame of the old-time fervor burst through the gray ash of convention.

They threw their arms about each other.

"Good-bye, Betty. I shall always love you."

"And I you, Edith. It is better so."

The men shook hands warmly. According to their agreement, William Hayes was to start immediately for

the West and negotiations would be concluded by telegraph.

In the automobile waiting for them sat Mrs. Van Diemer. She drew her skirts aside and made Edith sit close to her.

"It is all over, my child; you are resigned?"

Edith touched her eyes delicately with her web of lace. "Dear Betty," she said, and there was a world of regret in the amiable syllables. She looked up at the window where Betty was accustomed to stand when she drove away, but for the first time the golden-framed, laughing face was not there.

Betty was standing in the middle of the room. Her lips were dimpled, her eyes blue pools of laughter.

"I think," she whispered to her husband, who was watching her with no lessening of the old-time admiration, "if you open that door suddenly, you'll find Miss Pigott at the keyhole."



OH, DAYS DECEIVING

By John Vance Cheney

WHAT do you not, oh, days deceiving!
 You make the good man's bread a stone;
 And her whose heart was too believing,
 You let her rock her babe alone.



CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES

MRS. CRAWFORD—I thought you were going South this Winter for the sake of the golf?

MRS. CRABSHAW—I intended to, dear, but my husband made me a present of such a lovely set of furs!

BENJAMIN PERHAM'S HONEYMOON

By Harriet Gaylord

A MAN who expects to be married the following morning might be held to have just cause for grievance when his fiancée spurns his kisses the evening before, even though it be tacitly understood between them that she is marrying him for his money. Up to that critical moment Benjamin Perham had regarded Ruth Calvert's evident distaste for all familiarities as a guarantee of her superior blood and breeding, and his infatuation increased in proportion to her reserve. However, as he bowed swiftly back to Richmond after her repulse, the spirit of the man arose in protest.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "I ain't sure the game is worth the candle. I don't want to tame a menagerie or marry a Miss Nancy."

"Did you speak, sir?" asked his chauffeur.

"No, no, Dodson. No, I said nothing."

Perham's usual placid, portly, pink exterior was ruffled as he entered his hotel and passed abstractedly down the corridor. A woman saw him, hesitated, then stopped and put out her hand.

"It is really you," she said. "How do you do, Mr. Perham?"

"Why, why! How do you do?" He shook her hand vehemently up and down, wondering who on earth she was. It didn't make much difference—she was stunning beyond the need of being anyone at all. Her laugh rang out merrily.

"Do you mind lending me my hand for a few moments?" she asked. "Just long enough for me to tell you my name and pedigree, and to assure you we have been properly introduced?"

"Well, I mind, but since you insist, I release it. I know you, of course, and I'm no end of a chump not to remember your name, but I don't."

"That's not strange. We met only once, three years ago at a ball at the Marshalls'. You see, I couldn't forget the new multi-millionaire who contemplated paving New York with gold nuggets, and who honored me with a waltz."

"Probably stepped on your toes and tore off your train," grumbled Perham, his eyes feasting on her brilliant dark beauty and charm. "I deserve to be tied to a millstone and sunk in the big pond for forgetting such a crisis in my life."

"You knew my husband much better," she went on. "I think you were once in a business deal together—James Clifford?"

"By the Lord Harry!" he cried, seizing both her hands this time and pumping them vigorously. "Are you Jim Clifford's wife? Of the Irene mine? Well, I should say! Where's Jim?"

"In Elysium, I hope. He died in the Riviera that Spring."

"Oh, I remember. I did hear. I'm awfully sorry. Can you forgive me? I am bound to put my foot in it to-night. But what could you expect? I'm to be married at noon tomorrow."

"No? How jolly! To whom?"

"Say, you come in with me to have a bite of supper and we'll talk everything all over. Will you?"

"Why, of course. I'll be charmed."

"Now, tell me who she is," Mrs. Clifford demanded when they were seated at a table in an alcove, behind

some sheltering palms, and Perham had given the order.

"Well, she's Ruth Calvert. Ever hear of her?"

"Was her father General John Calvert?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of them, of course, but we left Virginia when I was a child. I landed in New York yesterday morning, and I'm on my way to visit my grandmother in Cumberland County. I've lived abroad ever since Jim died."

"What was your name?"

"Irene Fairfax."

"Oh! So you are one of 'em, too? Jamestown stock and all that?"

"Yes," she laughed, "my family is very much 'one of 'em.' But tell me more about Ruth Calvert. Is she pretty? And are you awfully in love? And how have you escaped the New York mamas?"

"Oh, she's a hummer, all right. You see, I didn't hanker after the '400' brand. I wanted——"

"Jamestown stock and all that?" she interrupted mischievously.

"That's right."

"And you, happy man, have the money to buy what you want!"

"That's right, too." He grinned a trifle sheepishly, then went on: "You see, I got Boyce Meade, the artist, to introduce me. Funny thing it was, too. I chose the girl he'd picked out for himself, and he went back to New York in a huff. We've kept the engagement quiet, and the wedding'll be private, but when I get back to town I expect Ruth'll make 'em all sit up and take notice. You see," he waxed confidential, "Ruth is marrying me for what she'll get. That's understood, but—well, I sort of hope she'll like me some day."

"If she doesn't, she's a little cat!" cried Mrs. Clifford. "You're all right, too, and I heartily congratulate your future wife. You see, I know all about you from Jim. For instance, he told me about that mine rescue——"

"Now, see here, Mrs. Clifford, it's delightful of you to throw bouquets, but just don't forget what I've got to

go through tomorrow. I won't have blushes enough left in stock to tide me over."

"Benjamin Perham, the one and only, afraid of blushes and coy about his virtues!" she cried mockingly. "Ah, you are showing me a side the world does not see!"

The big man leaned over the table, his eyes twinkling with delight.

"See here," he said, "I like you! You talk straight and you understand a fellow. I wish Ruth had more of your ginger. What's the difference between you, anyway? You're just as aristocratic as she, but you're mighty comfortable. She's always on a high horse."

Again her delicious laugh.

"Just a wee bit too late for such comparisons, don't you think?—or a wee bit too early!"

"Yes, I suppose so." With something very like a sigh he leaned back in his chair. "It's being married and living abroad, I suppose, that's made you human. Now, I've got money and I can make money and I can handle men and most women, but somehow tonight I felt sort of up against it with Ruth—sort of as if we ain't going to hit it off together."

"Bless your heart, man, don't worry! Every bachelor gets a funk the night before he signs away his freedom. Just drink some more champagne and drive out your blue devils!"

He laughed and obeyed; then began quizzing her about her life abroad. It was nearly midnight when they rose from the table.

"I hope I'll see you in the morning to hearten me for the show?" he asked, as he said good night.

"I leave at nine."

"Oh, I'll be up. I doubt if I sleep, anyway. It's awful! You've been an angel to tide me over this evening."

"Again I must ask you for my hand!" she murmured demurely.

"Why, am I holding it? I didn't know it, honest. It seemed so natural I'd like to hold it always."

"Oh, you shocking Mormon! Good night."

Perham had barely reached his room when a boy brought him a note with Boyce Meade's handwriting and a Richmond hotel letterhead on the envelope.

"Well, he's come, after all," said Perham aloud, as he tore it open. "That's good." Then he read:

MY DEAR PERHAM:

In spite of your words, "Fair field and no favors and we'll let the lady choose," I feel a good bit of a cad. I never intended you should marry Ruth Calvert from the first. Whatever she may have forced herself to believe, she had really chosen me long ago, and I couldn't stand meekly by and let you steal my property. So I kidnapped her tonight! At first she was pretty angry, but I soon convinced her that she wanted to marry me and not you. She is now Ruth Meade. She meant to keep to her bargain with you tomorrow, so don't blame her. The terms being exchanged, you would have done the same. With as much regret as a man can feel under such circumstances, I am,

Yours sincerely,

BOYCE MEADE.

P. S.—Ruth has sent for her trunks, and we are leaving by the midnight train.

Benjamin Perham did not waste time in oaths or laments. He had been thwarted, jilted, held up to scorn. The calamity called for action, and in action he was never deficient. In exactly six minutes from the time he had finished Meade's letter he rang the bell and handed two notes to the boy.

"Give this to your boss and this to Mrs. Clifford," he said, dangling a five-dollar bill before the boy's eyes, "and get back in three minutes. Look at this and skedaddle!"

The boy returned, all out of breath.

"Mr. Martin says he'll send a man up directly, sir. Mrs. Clifford says she will see you at once in her sitting-room, sir."

"Tell Mrs. Clifford I'll be there in five minutes. Bring the man here and wait outside to show me to her room. D'ye hear?"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir. I'll be here, sir. Here comes Mr. O'Brien, sir."

A young, gentlemanly-looking fellow was just stepping from the elevator.

"You wish to speak with me, Mr. Perham?" he asked.

"Yes. Come inside."

When the door was closed Perham said:

"You are a detective?"

"I am. I happened to be talking to Mr. Martin when your note came."

"All right. I want to engage your services indefinitely. You will want some money." He handed him two five-hundred-dollar bills. "This is just a retainer. There's plenty more where that comes from. Now to business. I was to have married Miss Ruth Calvert at the little church near her home tomorrow morning, but I've just had word from this hotel"—he passed him the envelope of Boyce's letter—"that she has eloped with Boyce Meade, the artist. You are to keep everything out of the papers tomorrow morning except the bare announcement, and you are to see that my own marriage notice is given particular prominence. Details in regard to that will be furnished you in time to get them into the papers here and to wire to New York.

"First of all, find out where Boyce Meade has taken his wife, and secure accommodations for my wife and me and yourself on the first train leaving about two o'clock. Briefly, our line of action for the next few days is this: Wherever Boyce Meade goes, we go, and you look sharp he don't suspect you are wise on his movements."

O'Brien looked amazed, then laughed.

"Excuse me, sir, but this is a sort of an original honeymoon, isn't it?"

Perham grinned.

"I reckon you're on to the size of it. I save my own face, and pay up a few scores by not letting her forget me. Meanwhile my wife and I will have good fun. Now you be back here in half an hour with a reporter or two if you like, and we'll fix up the papers. Hustle, won't you?"

The boy was waiting and Mrs. Clifford looked surprised when Perham entered her sitting-room.

"Didn't expect to see me so soon again, did you? Well, I'm up against it, and you've got to continue to be an angel and help me out. May I sit down?"

"Do! I'm so curious that I forget my manners."

He looked her over from head to feet.

"You'll do for me, all right," he said.

She rose, saying indignantly:

"Mr. Perham!"

"There! there! I've put my foot in it again, and I never felt more humble in my life. Do sit down and be generous. I've got to cast myself wholly on your mercy, and I don't want to make a mess of it. Will you sit absolutely still and listen for a few minutes and not interrupt, no matter what I say? You shall have your turn afterward. Promise me, won't you?"

She smiled.

"I'm very curious. I promise."

"Well, I shall tumble all over myself, but here goes. I'll tell you when you can speak. When I saw you tonight, Mrs. Clifford, something inside me felt queer. I've heard of that sort of feeling, but I never experienced it before. You see, I was feeling kind of offish—kind of as if it was no use to try to make Ruth like me. Of course, Boyce Meade implied that she loved him, but I never took much stock in it, and believed the man with money'd win out in the end. But tonight when I kissed her she struck me as if I'd insulted her. Now, most men kiss their wives a few times before they die, and it made me feel sort of sick. Then I met you, and you chirked me up, but, good Lord! you made me realize at the same time what I'd be missing in marrying Ruth. I've been no saint, as you probably know from Jim, and not the marrying sort. Ruth Calvert seemed the wife I wanted till I saw you, but I'd have gone on and made the mistake of my life if it hadn't been for Boyce Meade. Oh, I forgot to say I chucked the old life honestly before I got engaged to Ruth. You are a very different sort of woman."

He stopped and looked at her appealingly, then flushed like a schoolboy and his eyes fell as he continued:

"Well, it would take me less than one second if you said yes to feel I'd

found the woman before whom I'd want to stay on my knees all my days; whose hand I could take and into whose eyes I could look boldly as a good chum, believing I'd find pardon there for all my shortcomings; whose lips I should kiss knowing she was the one woman the Creator meant I should kiss when He made me; whom I could hold in my arms and heart and want nothing else in this life except to be worthy of her; who'd be all the heaven I'd want, here or in eternity. There!" he looked across the table into her shining eyes, "I never talked like that to any woman before in the world. I love you, I love you! I want you as I never before wanted anything in this life. My heart sings because I'm free to beg you to try me. I'm not much on words, but tonight I feel like a poet. Something inside of me is going so fast I can't stop. I love you, I love you, and I must have you, and have you tonight. I want you to marry me at once." He laughed. "Thank God with me that you see before you a jilted man who wants his own little revenge on the girl who jilted him, but who wants it on the line of such happiness as he never dreamed possible for himself. Boyce Meade ran away with Ruth Calvert tonight and, thank God! I'm free. We're going to be married now, you and I, and we're going to have the jolliest honeymoon, turning up wherever they go and showing them our happiness. If you weren't the wisest woman in the world, you'd think I asked you at such a time just to save my face, but you know! I see in your face that you know. I see in your face that I was wise not to let you talk and waste precious time before I'd convinced you. I see in your face that you're going to say yes; that you're coming straight into my arms and heart and home. I see in your face that you, too, feel the voice within which seals us for each other; that you, too, know there can never again be a life apart for you or me; that from this moment till God do us part we are to live together the happiest life man and woman ever lived, because we

feel the greatest love a man and woman ever knew."

He rose to his feet in his excitement and held out his arms.

"Come!" he said. "Come! My wife, come!"

He had so swayed her to his mood that she staggered as she rose and faced him, looking with frightened eyes into his.

"You haven't left much for me to say," she cried. "You've said it all. Are you sure you know I'm not marrying you for your money? You've said it all, and it's true! true! Every word is true." He gathered her to his heart.

At noon the next day, the very hour when Ruth Calvert was to have married Benjamin Perham, she and Boyce came down to their breakfast at the Glendower House at Buford.

"Get me a Richmond paper, won't you?" said Boyce to their waiter.

There was an ill-concealed grin on the man's face as he obeyed.

"They know who we are, Ruth," said Boyce, laughing. "Look up the notice while I write the order." He tossed the paper across to her.

In a moment she gave a little cry of amazement.

"Boyce!" she cried, "what does this mean? They've made a mistake. Here's a notice and a long article about Benjamin Perham's marriage. They've made a mistake—no, here we are, too. Why, he was married last night, also! What does it mean? Am I crazy?"

He took the paper she held out to him. The waiter had returned and Boyce gave him the order. When they were alone again he skimmed through the article.

"Irene Fairfax Clifford—who's she? Oh, I see, 'daughter of the late Robert Fairfax, United States Senator, and widow of James Stuyvesant Clifford.' Well, I'll be—"

He was interrupted by Ruth saying in an intense whisper:

"Boyce, as you value your life don't turn. They've just come in and are sitting behind you."

"Not Perham!"

"Yes," she whispered tragically, "Perham and the most stunning woman I ever saw in my life."

"Good Lord! What a disaster! Has he seen you?"

"No, but he is likely to any minute. He is in exact range, but too wrapped up in her to look about him. What shall we do? We can't go without breakfast. I'm awfully hungry."

"Change your seat as if you wanted to get a better view of the mountains." She obeyed.

"And now I feel his eyes consuming my profile," she said ruefully. "Do I look disturbed?"

"Cool as an iceberg, but this is a deuce of a scrape."

They ate their breakfast in pretended oblivion, but at last they heard the well-known stentorian voice coming their way, and knew the fatal moment had arrived. They raised their guilty eyes.

"Oh, how'd do, Meade? How'd do, Mrs. Meade?" said Perham, nodding carelessly as he passed. They assumed what nonchalance they could summon, and the crucial instant was over.

"Well, I'll be—" Meade shrugged his shoulders. Words failed!

From that moment the Perhams were ubiquitous. When the Meades were strolling along the dusty highway they would have to step aside for the plutocrat's machine to pass; when they were sitting on the veranda the Perhams, with a thousand wants, would keep the atmosphere lively with flying servants and obsequious clerks. Boyce and Ruth might have birth and breeding and love's young dream as assets, and the display of the others might be unspeakably vulgar, but it irritated, just the same. Finally Ruth said:

"Boyce dear, it's no use. They are deliberately trying to make us miserable. I don't care a picayune any longer for his old money, and you know it, but it's not flattering to be forgotten like this. He thinks he is making me madly envious of his wife because she has money to burn, but

it isn't that. It's just"—and as they happened to be sitting under some trees by the roadside and no one was passing, she hid her face on his shoulder—"it's just that I can't bear to be reminded constantly what an awful fool I was to think I didn't belong to you and could go and live with that man."

"Toot-toot!"—and then the chug-chug of Perham's automobile was heard. They sat apart hastily. Perham glanced down carelessly and the men raised their hats.

"That settles it!" said Boyce. "We won't have our whole honeymoon spoiled. We've got to go back to New York too soon as it is. I tell you what, Ruth, we'll go to Virginia Beach!"

"Boyce dear! Do you remember—?" and they were lost in reminiscence of one Summer they had spent there as children, long ago.

The next morning they slipped away quietly, when the Perhams were out in their machine.

"Thank the Lord we don't have to see them again!" said Ruth, but that night when they came down to dinner at the Princess Anne she realized that she had not counted on Benjamin Perham.

"Boyce, they're here!"

"Good Lord, no!" he groaned, and she murmured in response:

"From pestilence and the Perhams, good Lord deliver us!"

Boyce looked stern.

"This is really too much. It can't be chance any longer. It's Perham's revenge."

"Yes," she said pettishly, "it's revenge—small, vixenish revenge."

Suddenly Boyce burst out laughing.

"Not so small, either, if you have a sense of humor. I 'did him out of his girl,' as he would put it; he is showing me that it wasn't so serious after all, and saving his pride. What I can't understand is his expedition in finding the right woman. He is certainly more in love with her than he ever was with you."

Ruth tossed her head.

"But not more in love than I could have made him if I had wished."

"Oh, yes, he is," answered her uncompromising husband. "You could never have managed Benjamin Perham and you'd have hated each other in a week."

"Boyce, do you think she is more beautiful than I?"

"Ask Perham," he chuckled. "I don't want to marry her, if that is what you mean."

They decided to steal a march on their tormentors, and so stole off before daylight and kept in hiding at Old Point until the New York steamer sailed. When they were well out at sea the Perhams came on deck!

"I know now why Perham succeeds in all he undertakes," Boyce had quite entered into the humor of the chase, and Ruth was beginning to see with his eyes. "If I only had the money, I'd lead them a pretty dance, but the way to tire them out is to settle down to work in New York. Then when they've forgotten all about us, we'll sneak off and have an unmolested honeymoon."

That evening they sat dreamily side by side watching the moon rise out of the sea.

"Do you think you are ever going to be sorry, Ruth?" asked Boyce suddenly, his hand closing over hers.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she answered. "A thousand times a day I thank God that you stole me from my evil self that night when I had no power to flee."

A little later she said:

"If only I felt sure Mr. Perham understood, I could be quite happy."

Meanwhile, farther aft, in a darker corner of the deck, the Perhams were also sitting hand in hand, enjoying the moonlight and the water and their isolation.

"Don't you think, dear," said Irene at last, "that we have punished your Ruth sufficiently?"

"Do you want to know exactly what I do think?"

She laughed softly.

"My dearest, I want nothing else so

much as to get into the innermost consciousness of my blessed old rough diamond."

"Well, then, ever since I began this chase—ever since that first minute I held you in my arms—I've wanted to trot you up to that Good Samaritan kidnapper and say: 'Thank you for running off with Ruth Calvert and giving me this queen of women instead. Bless you, my children, and be happy in any old way you want to, but my private opinion is there isn't much happiness left over for you.'"

"Dearest, go and tell them now. We can spare that much out of our full measure."

He rose, then sat down again and leaned back in his chair, looking into her eyes.

"Rene," he said, "I hate to leave you even for one minute. I never thought I could get it this bad. If I'd missed you—God! supposing you hadn't come that night!"

"Ah, there is a God," she murmured. "He didn't let us miss each other. He couldn't be that cruel."

"I used to think Benjamin Perham was some pumpkins," he went on heavily, "but you've knocked it all out of me. I'm scared to think what a close call it was—my finding you. And I'm worse scared for fear some day you'll see me as I am. I never had much education; I'm a coarse sort of chap, full of conceit; and it don't stand to reason that I'll ever be able to keep the love of such a woman as you. Money can't buy your sort—what else have I to offer? 'Rene, I'm so changed I don't know myself. I'm just putty in your hands, and you'll get tired of a lump of coarse-grained putty some day. Why did you marry me?'"

"You dear old fool of a baby!" she whispered, and he felt her breath on his cheek in the darkness. "You don't know what you are just now, but I do. You are the king my soul delighteth to

honor! You are real, genuine, fine to the core, one man in a world of men, and we found each other. Listen! I loved Jim dearly, I thought, but—oh, not like this! I love you more every minute we live together, and I shall love you forever. Keep my love? It isn't a question of keeping it. You have absorbed all my being so I only dream and think and live in you. I want nothing else in all the world but you forever! Kiss me!

"Now go!" she said, laughing, a few minutes later. "I hope you feel invigorated for the journey."

Just at this moment Boyce Meade started to his feet.

"Ruth," he exclaimed, "I can't stand it any longer. I want to be at peace with all the world on such a night as this. I'm going around to see if we can't make it up with Perham," but even as he spoke Perham was upon them.

"How are you, Meade?" he said. "Say, do you think you can do that portrait of me before long? I want one of my wife, too. Oh, how are you, Mrs. Meade? I hope you two hit it off as well as my wife and I."

"That's awfully generous of you," said Ruth, holding out her hand. "We do hit it off well, Boyce and I, and I know in your heart you are glad we didn't make that mistake."

"Well, now, it wouldn't be gallant for me to say that."

"But honest?" persisted Ruth.

"Well," Perham turned again to Meade, "I reckon we do feel kind of as though you were an interposition of Providence. Won't you two come down aft? My wife wants to meet you."

Later, when the four parted for the night Perham said, with a twinkle in his eye:

"Some time this Summer we must have a double honeymoon on my yacht."



AN OASIS

By Pearl Wilkins

ALLISTON stood in the shade of a car, smoking a cigarette. Around him raged the tumult, voices of men in hot argument, voices of women in tearful supplication, the sound of steady hammering, the noise of escaping steam, and above all the strident voice of the conductor announcing to all passengers that the train "would move on at 4.30 sharp, and not a moment sooner."

Something was wrong with the engine. At least, that was what the engineer said. Alliston was not disposed to argue the case with him. He was willing to concede that the engineer knew more about it than he did. Besides, there were more than enough of his fellow-passengers insisting that the man was drunk and advising that he be shot at the next town. Alliston had no desire to swell the number, and, anyhow, it took more than a delayed train to ruffle his calm. The one motto which he had carried over from a more or less eventful boyhood was: "Don't make a fuss." Not a motto for every man, but one with which Alliston, being possessed of a very comfortable niche in the scheme of things, not to mention innumerable coffers overflowing with paternal shekels, managed, for the lack of a better, to rub along with very comfortably.

Therefore, when the west-bound train on which he was a passenger stopped for four hours and a half in the heart of the desert, fifty miles from the nearest station, and God only knew how many miles from the nearest house, with the unheard-of excuse of a balky engine, Alliston neither swore himself out of breath, as did some of

the passengers, nor frothed at the mouth, as did others. For his own part he did not care. So he smoked on tranquilly, watching with careless interest a little group of fellow-travelers, who, making the best of things, were picking their way through the hot, ankle-deep sand, gathering up stones and little bunches of sagebrush as souvenirs.

Presently from the Pullman ahead of him stepped a man and woman, joining the souvenir hunters. The woman was bareheaded and the man held a silk parasol over her, carefully shielding her face from the relentless desert sun. Alliston smiled a little as he looked at them. The woman was his wife. The man was Billy Sherwood. They were in love with each other—had been for more than five years. It was no secret. And Alliston, still smiling a little, noted the way they took, lighted a fresh cigarette and started off in the opposite direction.

Not that Billy and Alicia would not have welcomed him had he chosen to accompany them. The love of Billy and Alicia, though it had persisted for more than half a decade, was a perfectly civilized and well-behaved thing, which never dropped its mask of gay foolery and rendered no one, not even its devotees, uncomfortable. The presence of Alliston would have made no difference to them.

As for Alliston, he did not mind. He was not jealous. He and Alicia understood each other perfectly. There were no jarring elements in their ménage. Even Billy Sherwood fitted in as if he belonged there. At any rate, Alliston felt that he need not concern himself about

him. In the matter of Billy Sherwood he thoroughly trusted the judgment of Alicia. In turn, Alicia made things extremely comfortable for her husband. Alliston might come home from his club in the early dawn six nights in succession; the vision of a tearful and waiting Alicia never confronted him. Daintily-tinted notes addressed to him might arrive by the dozens, he might lose at cards, go slumming or wreck his yacht, and Alicia would not lift an eyebrow.

It was otherwise with Billy Sherwood. Alliston sometimes recalled with unholy joy how she had taken away poor Billy's cigarettes because she said they were killing him; how she would not speak to him for a week because he had danced three times in one evening with that little Fox girl; how utterly furious she had been that time he had gone shooting with a party of men for a whole Summer in the Adirondacks. Then she was always quarreling with him, or he with her. Alliston, to his infinite amusement, was often entreated by one or the other to act as mediator, and upon these occasions always smoothed out the "crumpled rose leaves," as he called it, with the utmost good nature. For he was quite well aware, being somewhat given to analysis and psychological musings, that had not Billy acted as a sort of safety-valve for Alicia, a portion at least of those angry glances, reproaches and perpetual bickerings with which the poor chap was constantly deluged might have fallen to the lot of Jasper Alliston. So far from being jealous of Billy Sherwood, Alliston, on the contrary, was rather inclined to thank the gods for him. And as, from his most charming house in a most charming portion of town, he surveyed other homes builded on entirely different plans many degrees less charming and serene than his own, Alliston much questioned the wisdom of marrying for love. "Love," said Alliston, "only complicates marriage."

Thus it was, undisturbed by any thought of love or lovers, that Alliston,

still smiling a little, puffing his cigarette, took a faint trail that led far out into the desert. Though he would not have acknowledged it, he was glad of the accident, glad of the enforced stop. For the desert was to Alliston what the sea is to some men and the tropics to others. Always since his earliest childhood the "land of little rain" had exercised for him an unexplainable fascination, and his youthful vocabulary had abounded in such words as scimitar, caravan, sheik, and the like. He had outgrown it, of course, or rather he thought he had. For the mystification of men and the subjection of women and incidentally for the concealing of certain idealistic and romantic tendencies he had assumed an air of amused tolerance, of tired indifference, of insolent carelessness toward things in general and life in particular, and had held to it so faithfully that he had deceived even himself. Here in the desert it was different. Alliston found himself dropping his air of indifference like an unnecessary garment.

It was a typical desert day. From horizon to horizon stretched the measureless span of turquoise that was the sky. In the centre blazed the sun, a ball of red-hot brass. From the parching sand arose heat waves, visible, palpable.

In a little while Alliston was perspiring from every pore. He pulled his hat a little further over his eyes and trudged on. Above him was the hot sky, below him the hot sand. He was alone. He threw away his cigarette, reveling in the solitude. It rested him, somehow. In these gray, shimmering wastes he felt that he could wander forever past all care, past all thought, past all feeling even, drifting endlessly in a hot dream. He thought of his fate if he should lose himself in these regions of burning sand and sad-colored sagebrush; he saw his white bones bleaching in the fierce sunlight. He pictured the consternation of his people—Alicia's fright and Billy Sherwood's genuine sorrow mingled with secret gladness that Alicia was free.

He wished that he might become a hermit, that he might dig a cave in the shady side of a bluff where day after day he could sit in the doorway and look out upon the desert.

The silence of noontime lay over everything; not a breath stirred, not a creature moved. The whole world lay lifeless and baking under the relentless sun. Among the rocks the tiny darting lizard paused, motionless. It was as if for a moment the pulse of the desert had stopped, as if she said to her children, "Hush! Hast thou prayers? Speak. I am listening."

Alliston was not given to praying. He did not pray now. Nevertheless, like an answer to a prayer was the thing that next happened to him. For suddenly, just as he reached the crest of a low hill, out of the grayness and the stillness there rose up from the dry bed of an arroyo a little adobe house, with tall blue-gum trees growing all around it and a little patch of green, wrested from the desert, in front of it. An orchard lay on one side of it and an alfalfa field, traversed by irrigating ditches, on the other; and as Alliston's startled eyes fell upon it he suddenly remembered that it was insufferably hot, that he had been walking an hour, and was abominably thirsty.

As he came nearer the house a sort of Sabbath stillness, an air of deserted emptiness that hung about it, reminded him that it was Sunday and that the inhabitants had probably betaken themselves to the nearest neighbors, to church, to the most convenient saloon or to whatever place furnished the favorite form of Sunday relaxation in these God-forsaken parts. He walked to the gate and pulled it open. A yellow dog lying with his head in a bed of nasturtiums looked up, blinked at him and returned again to his dreams.

"Evidently an enchanted castle," said Alliston.

Then his eyes fell upon a hammock stretched between two trees at the far end of the garden. Beside it stood a wicker chair and a little table, and in it and overflowing from it was a bundle

of thin black drapery, which, as Alliston approached nearer, resolved itself into the figure of a sleeping woman. Her head was thrown back, revealing the slim, white column of her throat. A book was slipping from her hand, and among the voluminous folds of her skirt peeped a slippered foot, delicately formed as a Spanish dancer's.

"And here is the princess," said Alliston, and smiled.

Then he looked at her and the smile died. She was very beautiful, but not so beautiful as she once had been. The years or the desert sun or something else had drawn fine lines around her eyes and the corners of her mouth and had painted under the long-lashed eyelids tired circles that had no business there. Her hair was wonderful. Silken, loosely waving, gold, brown and dark reddish all at once, it lay in a glittering tangle about her face. The strong light brought out its beauty. It brought out something else, too. For, as Alliston looked at it, he noticed among the bright ripples at the left temple a single silver hair.

He roused himself with a sigh. "Madam," he said gently. Then, as she did not waken, "Madam!" he said again.

She opened a pair of eyes the color of violets and regarded him with that lack of surprise with which we greet the personages of our dreams.

"Are you the prince?" she asked dreamingly.

Alliston started. "Why—er—no!" he said at last. "I rather am inclined to believe I am the court fool."

She rubbed her eyes. "Why, you are real!" she exclaimed in surprise. "Until you spoke I'm afraid I thought you to be of that stuff that dreams are made of."

"Evidently," said Alliston, smiling. "Since you mistook the sound of jester's bells for the rattle of the prince's armor."

"You look uncommonly like the prince," she said courteously.

"Surely no one would doubt that you are the princess," declared Alliston.

She smiled; a rather unusual smile,

faint and grave as though she had not practised it overmuch.

"And am I to believe *that* the speech of a fool?"

Alliston laughed. "Well, you have me there," he exclaimed in a very unprince-like fashion. "I suppose I'll have to be the prince, then."

She got up from her hammock and stood pushing it back and forth with one hand.

"And now, Sir Prince," she said lightly, "since your identity is settled—whence came you here, what is your errand, and how may I serve you?"

"Know, O Princess," began Alliston in mock-heroic accents, "that the Knight of the Blue Coat and Brazen Buttons who leadeth our cavalcade through the desert hath halted it for four mortal hours and a fraction over. I come from the halting-place. My errand is of course a fool's errand, and you may serve me, if you will, with a cup of cold water."

"A cup of cold water?" she repeated. "Certainly. Sit down and I will bring it at once."

Alliston threw his hat on the grass and seated himself in the wicker chair beside the little table. He watched her till she had disappeared within the house, and then bent and picked up the book she had dropped. It was a collection of German stories bound in dull garnet and gold, worn and shabby from hard usage. It opened at a certain page, and Alliston stopped to read the underlined poetry:

*Heute, nur heute bin ich so schön;
Morgen, ach morgen muss alles vergeh'n;
Nur diese Stunde bist du noch mein;
Sterben, ach sterben soll ich allein.*

Alliston closed the book with a snap. He knew the lines well enough. He had met with them in his "prep" school days. He was conscious of a vague surprise at finding them here.

A screen door slammed, and the next moment he saw her coming across the grass. In her hands she carried a snowy-covered tray which held, in addition to a slender pitcher and glasses, two little pink plates piled high

with amber grapes and red-cheeked peaches.

She blushed as he looked up. "I hope you will pardon me," she began nervously, forsaking the manner of a princess, "but as I am hungry, I thought possibly you might be also. You have had a long walk. Won't you stay a while and rest? I shall be most glad to have you."

"And I shall be most glad to stay," declared Alliston gaily, as she placed the tray on the table and poured a glass of water for him. "I will confess, Princess, that nothing has found such favor in my eyes in a long while as the sight of your fruit. I had no idea you could grow such things here."

"Water!" she exclaimed tersely. "We have two artesian wells and—other contrivances."

She sat down in the hammock. "You see," she began, still apologizing, "a stranger in these regions is such a *rara avis*. Day after day it is the same thing. No one ever comes. A strange voice is music to our ears."

"Yes," said Alliston, looking around him, "I should judge that you did not pine for solitude here."

She laughed unpleasantly. "No," she said shortly.

She toyed with the cord of a cushion. In spite of her assertion that she was hungry, she ate scarcely anything, but fed her share of grapes to the yellow dog which had awakened and come over to them.

Alliston talked to her—light commonplaces about her flowers and her fruit and the accident which was responsible for his presence there, and she responded quietly enough. Yet for all her even tones, there was about her a curious lack of repose, an air of restlessness, of discontentment, as of one harassed by an inner fever. Her face had a curious repressed look, as if life had cheated her.

What was the matter with her, anyway, and what was she doing in such a place as this?

Alliston was asking himself these questions for the twentieth time, when

she looked up and surprised his eyes on her face.

"Well?" she demanded. "What is it?"

"What is what?" asked Alliston, puzzled.

"What is it my face tells you?"

"Why—er—" began Alliston, feeling very uncomfortable, "I was just wondering—you don't look as if—er—do you live here?"

She nodded. "Oh, yes," she said. "I am a product of the desert. I was born here. I have lived here all my life except for a half-dozen years when I was away at school."

"I suppose, then," said Alliston pleasantly, "that I must be very careful in speaking of your desert. Not that I would wish to say anything derogatory," he added hastily. "To me the desert has always seemed a sort of lotus-land."

"A lotus-land!" she exclaimed. "I'm afraid you are confused. It is not the lotus plant, but the loco weed that grows in these parts. Quite a different thing, you see. A lotus-land!" She laughed scornfully. "It is hideous," she said. "I hate it. Dear God, how I do hate it!"

"Have you always felt like this about it?" asked Alliston.

"Oh, no," she replied, resuming her listless air again. "I loved it once. Years ago. When I was a child. But to hate a thing most thoroughly you must have loved it once, must you not?"

"Why, I don't know," said Alliston, wondering where she had picked up such an idea. He pushed away his plate, and she looked at him with a sudden panic in her eyes.

"You are not going yet, are you?" she asked quickly. "Don't you smoke or something? Please stay a little longer. You have lots of time—more than two hours." She dug a little hole with her heel in the hard ground. "Besides," she said, not looking at him, "I want to tell you something. I want you to stay till I've told it. Then you must go away and forget it—every word of it. If you do not,

I shall die of shame. Yet I must tell you. No doubt you will think me crazy, but I can't help it. Are you listening?"

Alliston lighted a cigarette. "Yes," said he.

She let her hands fall limply in her lap. About her there was a peculiar "still" quality that reminded him of Alicia on the occasion of Billy Sherwood's first call after that Adirondack affair.

"You see," she said, at length, "I have been waiting for you a long time."

Alliston looked startled.

"Do not be alarmed," she reassured him calmly. "I am perfectly sane. But it is quite true. I have been waiting for you a long time—a long, long time."

"I cannot remember when I first began looking for you, but it must have been years ago, for I was very little. In the long, hot days when the grown-up people with whom I lived were asleep or at work I used to scoop out a cool place in the hot sand and lie there for hours, flat on my stomach, thinking of you. You lived in a palace at the edge of the desert. If I waited long enough or did not fall asleep in my cool hollow of sand, I caught a glimpse of your spires and towers, the wavering circle of trees that grew around them and the cool, green-fringed pool that reflected their shadows. The grown-up people said it was a mirage. They were the same grown-ups who laughed when I told them that giants lived among those red buttes you see to the west of us. They were hard to understand, these grown-up people. One of them believed he could reclaim the desert country; he thought the day would come when he would make the whole desert blossom as the rose. Yet he laughed at me!"

"You were very wonderful in those days. You wore a black velvet suit embroidered with gold, and yellow lovelocks flowed lightly over your shoulders. Sometimes you came in a coach-and-four drawn by milk-white steeds. Other times you pre-

ferred a chariot like Queen Mab's. Always you carried me away to your palace at the edge of the desert. We were very happy there. All day long the black servants that were devoted to us played on strange instruments the sweetest music that ever was heard. All day long swans swam on the little green-fringed pool where we played from morning till night. All day long they were busy in the palace bringing to us on dishes of gold and silver delicacies beside which nectar and ambrosia were dust and ashes. It was gay, that life of ours!

"Then as I outgrew my love for fairy-tales you, too, underwent a change. You cast away your black velvet embroidered with gold, your coach-and-four, your palace at the edge of the desert. No longer did yellow love-locks flow lightly over your shoulders. You wore a coronet instead, for you were an English lord, and had come to the desert country—do not laugh—to hunt lions! You were rich and handsome and prouder than many kings. But one day you met me, riding among the red buttes where the giants used to live, and you forgot those things as though they had never been. . . . Oh your lady-mother waited long years for you, in her castle over the seas, while you stayed on in my desert!

"It was at this period of my dream-life that something really did happen to me. I was sent away to school; miles and miles beyond the red buttes, miles and miles across the gray sand, until not even a bunch of sagebrush remained to remind me that I had once lived in a desert. For six years I only came back at intervals. Very happy were those brief six years, crowded with good times and hard study, but I did not forget you even then. You grew with my growth and altered as did I. Sometimes you were a poet, putting into words thoughts and longings which I and the world could only feel; sometimes a musician, sometimes a reformer standing like a demigod among little men. Ah, those six years did many things

for me, and not all were good things, but they could not rob me of my dreams.

"And then one day, of all the days of my life the most terrible, there came those who were sent to tell me that I must go back, that she who had made these six years possible, she who had hated the desert even as I hate it now—my mother—was dead!

"So I came back, miles and miles from the pleasant city, miles and miles across the gray sand till the desolate red buttes lay behind me and I stood where years before I watched for your spires and towers, the wavering circle of trees and the green-fringed pool that reflected their shadows. Ah, I was sorrowful enough in those days, but it was not a bitter sorrow and the desert comforted me. 'Little daughter of men,' it said to me. 'Why do you weep? I am old. The bones of many children lie whitening on my breast. I make no sign. Why moan over past griefs? They are done. Dry your eyes and look into the future. Joy is there.'

"I was seventeen and the glory of my dream was in my eyes. I was very beautiful. The rough miners and the cattlemen who stopped on their way across the desert, did they but catch a glimpse of me, came back again and again. I never looked at them. The girls from the mining camps and ranches who sometimes rode by with their escorts on their little cow-ponies laughed at me and called me a fool. I never heard them. At times, after long silences, letters came to me from the world where I had lived for six years—kind, comforting letters, praising me for my courage, pitying me for my loneliness. I was never lonely, never sad. Were not you to come some day out of the gray wilderness and change the world for me? Each morning I said, 'Perhaps he will come today.' Each night, 'Tomorrow.'

"I planted these flowers for you, this grass, these trees. I studied for you, reading and re-reading my little store of books. I knew your speech would not be the speech of those who fried

their bacon over camp-stoves in our corral.

"For you each day I swept my little house, put it all in order, and garnished it with flowers like a temple. It was one morning while I was doing this that I had a visitor. She was an old, old Mexican woman, so old that she seemed only the husk of a human being. She was one of a party of Indian and Mexican sheep-shearers who had stopped at our well to fill their canteens and rest their mules. She came and stood on the threshold of my little kitchen, sniffing the odor of the crushed balm leaves strewn upon my adobe floor, peering in with her old, bloodshot eyes at the bowls of yellow nasturtiums and branches of scarlet honeysuckle that brightened my bare walls.

"'Little one,' she said in her hoarse, dust-choked tones, 'what god do you serve?'

"And with the insolence of youth I answered gaily, 'Why, the love-god, mother. Have you never heard of him?'

"'The love-god!' she babbled, eyeing wistfully the brown cakes and the golden comb of honey I was fetching from the cupboard. 'The love-god! He does not live in these times. When I was young——'

"But I had no time to listen, and presently she went away, mumbling to herself and leaning heavily on her stout manzanita stick as she hobbled out of my little flower-sweet garden. Ah, if she were to come today she should have it all; the honey, the white bread and the ripest peaches! I would listen—yes, I would listen till her stories were told. . . .

"My flowers bloomed and faded, my trees grew tall and cast their shade over the garden. The days grew into weeks, the weeks to months, the months to years. You did not come! But I was very patient. I was young, I could wait. Every day I said over my one prayer: 'Oh, God, let my dream come true!'

"An old sheep-herder for whom I had once done a kindness gave me a

pack of cards and taught me how to tell my fortune with them. I used to spread them out upon the sand and pore over them. When the omens were good I would go about all day with a bird singing in my heart. Other times, when the dark man plotted against me or the blonde lady persisted in keeping you from me, I grew angry with myself, gathered them hastily together and stuffed them into a dark corner of the highest shelf. Always I got them down again, counting them one by one, spreading them out upon the sand and staring at them.

"It was weary work waiting. Those miners and cattlemen who came and went their way again, the light girls who laughed and rode by on their ponies, the old sheep-herders, the mangy Indians and half-breeds urging their little rat mules across the desert, the birds that rested in my trees and flew on to pleasanter places, the winds that woke in the night and sighed—all these things that had voices and could speak—did none of them whisper to you of a place in the desert where there were water and green grass, a place where a girl sat forever looking out upon the desert, waiting?

"I watched the horizon till spots danced before my eyes, and a speck, a blur in the distance would send me off panting to the house to smooth the folds of my dress or pin a flower in my hair. Sometimes when I had been away for a little while I would return with a chill fear in my heart that you had come—and gone, or a hope that I might find you waiting within. But I never did.

"It was only very gradually that a doubt took possession of my mind. I cast it from me. I would not see it, but it grew—a doubt that you would ever come!

"'Oh, God,' I prayed, 'I have had so very little. Give me this one thing!'

"You never came. Before me lay the desert, no longer a magic territory where fairies lived. Silent, sphinx-like, mysterious, a thing that swallowed the bones of men and made no sign, it mocked me, and I hated it.

"Ah, those suns that would not go

down, those nights that never went! How many days I wasted, hour by hour waiting for you; how many never-ended nights I lay awake thinking of you into the breathless dawn! Far into the darkness have I waited, watching the gray wavering shadows, listening till my very pulse stopped, and my nerves grew tense like the strings of a violin.

"Sometimes when the world lay dreaming under the moonlight and 'all the night spoke longingly of love' I sent my cry like a bird, far out into the desert, saying, 'Come!' to you.

"Where were you that you never came? What were you doing that you never heard?

"Once—it was a June evening, my roses were in bloom, and the moonlight made of my garden a beautiful place—as I sat on the doorstep pulling off one by one the petals of a red rose, murmuring under my breath the words of an old rhyme my mother used to say: 'He loves me, he loves me not,' I looked up and I saw you at the gate. You were riding and the sound of your horse's hoofs had fallen so softly on the sand that I had not heard you. You sprang from your saddle, unlatched the gate and came up the walk. I stood up and pulled off the last red petal. It said, 'He loves me,' and you came close to me and kissed me just one long kiss. And you said, 'Come,' and I put my hand in yours and together we went out of the garden. You lifted me to the saddle, got on behind, and we rode away into the moonlight. Your arms were around me. Your breath in my hair, and I said: 'It is sweet. Pray God it is not a dream!' I woke. *It was a dream!*

"Ah, is it not sad what concessions we make as we grow more familiar with life? When I was young I asked, nor thought I demanded much, a whole lifetime of happiness. Now I said in my agony, 'A year, a month, a week and I will be content!' You *never* came.

"And then one day—oh, it was not long ago—I looked in my mirror, looked till I could not see myself for a blur of tears, and knew that it was all

over, that destiny and the desert had won and the dream was only a dream.

"And now you have come!—when it is too late, when I am worn and beaten and old. Oh, the tragedy in most lives is not that dreams never come true, but that they come true too late. The mockery of it that you should come now!"

She stopped abruptly. In the sudden silence the yellow dog could be heard yapping in his dreams. When she spoke again her voice was low and tired.

"That is all," she said; "you may go now."

Alliston raised his head. In his eyes was the dazed look of one who has been reading an absorbing story, or has listened a long time to softly played music.

"Go now?" he repeated, not comprehending.

The hot blood rushed to her face. "Yes, go now!" she cried. "I have told you everything! I have put into words for you, an utter stranger, the things I had not thought to tell anyone in this world. I have said it all shamelessly! And I have been a fool, a fool!"

She covered her face with her hands.

Alliston bent forward and laid his hand lightly on her arm, so lightly that she thought it was a leaf dropped from the trees above her.

"Listen, Princess," he said in a low voice. "Do you know of what I have been thinking? I have been thinking of that ride—the ride we missed—that ride across the desert in the moonlight when you were seventeen and I twenty!"

Her hands fell suddenly away from her face. "You—you understand," she whispered.

"And is it such a miracle?" asked Alliston. "Ah, Princess, yours is not the only desert. As for our being utter strangers, surely I have known you a thousand lifetimes."

She smiled, her rather unusual smile, faint and grave, as though she had not practised it overmuch.

"A pretty fancy," she said.

"And is it all fancy?" questioned Alliston. "Surely it is for the sins of some forgotten life that we were compelled in this one to waste precious years, you hating your desert, I hating mine."

"Are you a poet?" she inquired.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Alliston fervently. "Do I look like one?"

She laughed, not scornfully nor harshly as she had laughed before, but lightly, joyously, the laugh she must have had when she was seventeen.

"No, you do not," she said frankly.

A puff of wind came and set her thin black draperies fluttering and billowing; a sunbeam flickering through the trees cast a thousand golden points in her hair. Alliston looked at her and forgot what he was going to say. He pulled out his watch.

"Princess," he said, "the gods have given us another hour. If I hurry I can make it back to the train in a half-hour."

He placed the watch on the table beside him. "Think of it, Princess," he said; "we have an hour! Some have a lifetime, others years and some have months in which to know each other. We have an hour! What is it that old chap from the Fatherland says about '*nur diese stunde bist du noch mein*'? That's our case, isn't it? Well, let's let the rest go. We have an hour. What shall we talk about?"

She leaned forward eagerly. "You have heard my story," she said. "Now tell me yours—all that you can remember; all the petty little happenings, the little trivial incidents—everything!"

Alliston had always maintained that it was bad policy to tell things to women. "Let *them* talk," said he. But for once in his life he forgot his theories, and when at length he looked at his watch and found it was time for him to go the woman before him knew more of the real Alliston than others had discovered in an acquaintanceship of years.

But perhaps the telling of his tale

had bored him, for when he had finished he rose wearily and stood looking down upon his companion with somber eyes.

"Good-bye, Princess," he said at last. His voice was very low.

"Good-bye," she answered.

Alliston took her outstretched hand. "Our hour is gone," he said. "We shall never see each other again. Won't you—may I—kiss you?"

When he came in sight of the train once more, lying like a monster black-snake across the grayness of the desert, groups of passengers still lounged in the shade of the cars and souvenir hunters still waded through the ankle-deep sand. After a while a couple disengaged themselves from the rest and came to meet him. It was Alicia and Billy Sherwood. Alicia was carrying her hat in her hand and Billy still held a parasol over her, shielding her from the hot desert sun. Beside a little clump of sagebrush they stopped and waited for him.

"Good heavens, Jasper," they called, as soon as he could hear them, "where under the sun have you been? We were about to send out a searching-party."

Alliston consulted his watch. "I thought this train was to start at four-thirty," said he.

Billy Sherwood laughed heartily. "Shades of hades!" he said, "are you such an innocent, Jasper, as to take a train-official at his word? Don't you know it's one of his duties to lie glibly and gracefully? This train won't start for an hour."

"Not for an hour!" exclaimed Alliston. "Good God! why didn't the fool say so!"

Alicia looked at him in surprise. "What difference does it make to you, Jasper?" she asked. "You know Janet is not expecting us. She——"

"Oh, Janet," said Alliston dully. "I was not thinking of her."

He looked so pale and tired that Alicia, with unusual solicitude, laid her hand upon his arm.

"What is the matter, Jasper?" she asked. "Are you ill?"

Far away in the shadow of the little adobe hut huddled in the dry bed of an arroyo a woman raised her transfigured face to the opalescent desert sky.

Around her stretched the desert—silent, sphinx-like, mysterious. She loved it. The sun burned low. At the base of the bleak red buttes where the giants dwelt faint shadows gathered, pink, violet, dull heliotrope, indescribably lovely; presently against the amber sky the desert bird would be singing. It was wonderful, her desert. She knew that never again would she find it hideous. Once more it was a magic territory. A little way down the arroyo a cactus uplifted its fleshy limbs, squat and unwieldy like a clumsy heathen god; above the stifened carcass of a coyote the buzzards fought over their loathsome feast;

beneath the shelter of a rock a rattle-snake coiled, waiting. Her eyes saw only the violet-bathed cliffs, the rain-bowed pathway over which had come the king. Out of the tawny waste of sand and sagebrush he had come at last, handsomer than the pictures of an old-world god, more prince-like than the hero of her fairest day dream.

Those suns that would not go down, those nights of fevered waiting into the breathless dawn, were forgotten. The weary years that lay behind her, the long dull years that were to come, counted as nothing against one rapturous hour.

She fell on her knees beneath the trees she had planted when her dream was yet young.

"Dear God," she said, "I thank Thee, I thank Thee!"

The dream had come true.



THE WAITRESS SPEAKS

By Ethel M. Kelley

THE male cashier that took the lady's place,
He ain't a feller that the girls would chase,
But he has such a pleasant kind o' way,
I sorter hope that he has come to stay;
The girl we had—she couldn't keep the pace.

He seems to like *me* better'n even Grace,
An' Marne an' Lou declare he has a case
On me, but I tell them, "Go on! Nay, nay,
The male cashier!"

But since he's came, I've seemed to take a brace;
'Tain't that I feel as if I'm in the race.
I ain't forgot, no matter what they say—
It's only easy gettin' through the day
Knowin' there's one ain't sour upon my face—
The male cashier.

THE POINT OF VIEW

By Margaret Potter

WHEN the crash — Bevon's last crash—came there were but four waiters, besides the chef and the under-cooks, in the kitchen. At Bevon's feet lay a huge trayful of shattered dishes, mingling with and spattered by gravy and broken food. The man himself still stood staring, stupidly, at the wreck when the swinging-doors opened and Daugherty, the head-waiter, rushed in.

He was the only person who appeared to be at all affected by this rather usual incident. He gave a single, furious glance at his subordinate, and then cried out:

"Devil take you, Bevon! Three in ten days, and the gentlemen waiting ten minutes already—on a five-dollar order! By God! how d'you imagine my tips come to me, when scum like you go on like this, makin' every customer crazy? See here! you're discharged—without notice. You'll finish serving this one meal. And you, Smith," turning to the second cook, "duplicate that order like h—! Afterward, Bevon, you can go to the boss for your time—if there's anything left over from your breakage account. Get to work, now, with that mess!" And the angry Head, turning on his heel, strode from the kitchen, to placate, if possible, the impatient guests who were expecting their delayed meal.

Meantime the discharged man had knelt beside the wreck. Smith, grumbling audibly, set about renewing the order. And the waiting men occupied themselves in guying, unmercifully, the silent unfortunate, who was laboriously and patiently removing the

traces of his accident, gathering up the remnants of a dinner such as he himself had not tasted in five deadening years.

The two gentlemen at the table had endured seven more extremely impatient minutes when at last their dinner was laid before them, by a wretched man whose hands shook visibly as he awkwardly served them their entrée, game and vegetable, salad and cheese, and, lastly, *café noir*, laced with the best cognac of the restaurant's cellar. By the time the gentlemen rose, indeed, every nerve in Bevon's hungry body was tingling. And possibly it was some faint perception of his condition that led the host to waive punishment for long delay and poor service, and leave a fifty-cent piece on the plate containing his change.

This Bevon pocketed dully. But he did not wait to clear the table—Daugherty might do that if he chose. And by the time the two guests had lighted their cigars and set out for their theatre the waiter was rapidly stripping off his professional garments, in the dark little basement hole designed for that purpose. Ten minutes later he appeared at the door of the proprietor's private room, his rented suit wrapped in a newspaper and carried under his arm.

His employer was certainly in an unfavorable frame of mind. Daugherty had been to him early in his wrath and the price of the broken china, as figured out between them, was not calculated to bring loss upon the establishment. The discharged man, also, had busied himself with mental arithmetic, and his heart was very

heavy as he mumbled his request for his "time." The frowning proprietor drew something from a box lying in his open safe, stuck it into an envelope, and pushed it forward, together with the usual receipt. While Bevon signed, without even looking at the amount, his ex-proprietor deigned to comment.

"Three stoppages within ten days, Bevon. You'd better try mining or blacksmithing, I think. Anyhow, don't apply here again—unless you come as a guest!" Which parting jocularity put him into sufficiently good humor to smile as he watched the man sink out of his office.

One solitary satisfaction Bevon had. For the first time in three miserable months he left the restaurant by its front entrance, not by the dark and narrow service door, which led into an alley. Out in the frozen street, he bent his steps westward, in the direction of the cheap lodging-house wherein he occupied a single, dingy room, a room unpaid for for the past three weeks, and now altogether beyond his means. A shudder, accompanied by a little streak of nausea, shot through him. When he had quelled both he found himself in the brilliant lights of a corner drug-store; and it occurred to him that he might as well pause here and examine the contents of his pay-envelope, to see whether or not they tallied with his own calculations. Accordingly he drew the paper from his pocket and opened it. It contained one one-dollar bill! One!—and he had made it three. Had they—? Ah, well, there on the sheet in his hand he read the cost of his breakages. It was probably correct. His must have been the miscalculation; for arithmetic, so far from being a strong point of his, had been the weakness to which he owed his present predicament. So, in the whole world, he possessed just one dollar and fifty-five cents, together with the clothes he had on, his rented dress-suit, and two shirt-fronts! Also, he owed his landlady six dollars rent, and one dollar more to the manager of the clothing store.

These thoughts grouped themselves in his mind with quite unwonted rapidity. They were followed by another, a new and strange idea, which, six years ago, he would have deemed himself incapable of, though now he acted upon it at once. Taking out his single handkerchief—which he washed every night, and dried on the window-pane—he folded it and put it to his ear. Then he entered the drug-store, mentioned his earache, and bought a bottle of laudanum, for which he paid thirty-five cents. And as he watched the clerk pasting on the scarlet label, with its white skull and poison warning, it seemed to him that the burden that he had borne about with him for five dreary years fell off, entirely.

Finishing his walk—he would have taken a cab had one passed him—he found himself warmed through with elation and excitement. He entered his room, tossed bundle and hat upon the bed, and seated himself on the more comfortable of his two rickety chairs, before his bureau. Upon this, the fourth and last article of his furniture, he spread out before him his dollar, his bottle of laudanum, a cracked glass and a tin pitcher of ice water, the sole luxury that he had known in America, vaunted land of gold.

Seated thus, Arthur Bevon sat and gazed at the face that looked back at him from the blurred glass. Fortunately, he did not really see himself. He saw only his own painfully-constructed idea of himself, which was also an ideal. Certainly no physical beauty belonged to him. He was a tall man, lank and loose-jointed. His sallow face, further yellowed by liver spots, was set with watery, pale blue eyes, and framed in thin, sandy hair, a little speckled with gray. His profile was triangular, the first slope being from brow to nose-tip, the second from nose to the collar-edge which might easily have been drawn up over his lack of chin. Then, as if malicious Nature had not yet sufficiently amused herself with him, she had finally denied him brain-room by making the back of his head another, almost straight, line.

Thus, none that saw him as he was could greatly have marveled that five years of incognito in America should have brought Arthur Bevon to the point whereat he sat tonight—before his single dollar and the laudanum bottle! But Bevon, seeing only with his own eyes, sat musing bitterly till he had managed to wrap himself in a huge mantle of self-pity. And indeed it is possible that his was the truest judgment. He would never himself have chosen either the interior or the exterior that was his.

And he had tried so hard! He had embarked, high-hearted, in so many golden enterprises, in which only a little capital—five hundred or so—was needed to produce millions! But the millions mysteriously failed to appear. And each time the five hundred became a little more painful to part with, till there came a day when they did not exist. And so, these hands which had been made to remain forever white and soft and well cared for were now hard and bony, and calloused on the inner side of every knuckle. Even this manual labor had availed him nothing! Malignant Fate had dogged him wherever he could go. Nevertheless the thought occurred to him, here at the end, when his enemy believed she had him by the throat, he should slip from her grasp, finally and forever, wringing a hurrah of victory from the very wail of defeat! Suicide might be sin. Well, had he not bravely done what man could do to stave it off? Surely, for one of his race, dishonor must always be worse than death! And this last thought he did, indeed, hug fast to his heart!

The soliloquy was over. Bevon had never been in the habit of protracted reflection. He supposed the thing must be done; therefore it were best to get it over at once. It was with a fairly steady hand that he emptied the contents of the bottle, to the last drop, into the glass, and weakened it with a little water. He was on his feet, now. His forehead was dripping with sweat. It occurred to him that the taste of the stuff might be very bad—

it looked so—and he might need something stronger than water to remove it. Opening a drawer in his bureau, he drew forth half an apple, brown on the cut side, but still sound. It had provided his supper on the previous night. This would do now. With it in his left hand he lifted Death in his right.

Then he paused.

This was the instant in which there rushed over him the mighty flood of theological fears—teachings inculcated in youth; ideas acquired later. After all, everyone did speak of punishment for suicides. No murderer might win to heaven. Some people called *this* murder! Horrid! What might be the supernatural dictum? Dared he find out for himself?

His hands were shaking very badly now. Fearful lest he might spill his release, Bevon set down the glass. After a minute he placed a heavy sheet of paper over its top. Well, he had the night before him. Why worry till morning came? No one could dun him at this hour.

So, fifteen minutes later—of which ten had been spent with soap, water and toothbrush—the ex-waiter was in bed.

It was one of his many happy-go-lucky attributes that Bevon was always able to sleep when he would, and to sleep dreamlessly. Long since accustomed to the roar of the vast commercial city which surrounded him, he sank into oblivion on this night, and for twelve hours scarcely turned his head upon the pillow. The necessities of his position as waiter had left his conscience, evidently; for it was ten o'clock next morning before he woke to a day as dark and as dreary as his own mind. Behind the smoke that hung over all the city hovered dusky snow-clouds, so that daylight scarcely showed at the dingy windows even by this mid-morning hour. Drearily, therefore, he crept out of bed and lighted his single flaring gas-jet, wishing, meantime, with all his heart, that the fatal step had not been put off till today.

Scarce knowing why he did it, the man set to work to dress himself completely, with a copious washing preceding the final stages. While he fastened his collar and tied his cravat, his eyes were glued upon the glass containing that dark brown liquid; and presently, when he was fully dressed, he sank back in the nearest chair, with a faint gasp of desperation.

Just at that instant there came a knock at the door.

Visions of Jewish duns, weeping landladies, bullying head-waiters demanding his final dollar, flickered before Bevon's eyes. Yet, despite the trembling of his knees, he rose up instantly, crossed his room and opened the door—upon a person whose aspect seemed vaguely familiar. At least, here was no deputy of any creditor, this elderly gentleman, attired, despite the early hour, in close-buttoned frock-coat and top hat, both of unmistakable English cut. Also, to Bevon's "May I ask whom you want, sir?" a voice more English than his own responded:

"I am hunting for a gentleman known, I believe, as Arthur Bevon."

"I am Arthur Bevon. Ah—will you come in, please?"

"Thank you, thank you!" responded the visitor, entering and closing the door after him. "You will, I am sure, forgive me; I suppose there is no doubt about your identity?"

"If you want the Arthur Bevon who left the Guards five years and two months ago, after a nasty cropper, and came to America——"

"Enough, sir! Quite enough—asking your lordship's pardon! I am sure that I may at last congratulate myself on having discovered the whereabouts of your lordship!" And the stately oracle, removing his hat, executed a portly bow.

"My l-l—! Look here, what the devil are you getting at?" And Bevon, who had gone white to the lips, sank into a chair.

Immediately his visitor, who had, up to this moment, remained respectfully on his feet, settled himself in the

only other place, and, smiling benignly, began: "Your lordship is astonished, I perceive. That is, perhaps, not remarkable under the circumstances. I will, however, at once make the matter clear.

"And first of all, allow me to introduce myself. I am Inglessey Kennedy, solicitor, junior partner of the firm of Barnside, Ellis & Kennedy, who have had the honor to serve your lordship's cousin for the past twenty years. I sailed from England, to find you, eighteen days ago; and I only succeeded yesterday in ascertaining your lordship's whereabouts. For this reason——"

"I know! I see! Good God, Kennedy, come to the point!"

"Certainly, sir. Immediately. As I was saying, your lordship left London a little more than five years ago. That was about the time of the birth of the old earl's grandson. Perhaps your lordship is unaware that the little boy died two years ago?"

"By Jove! I hadn't heard it! There were no more children?"

"None, your lordship. That, of course, left only the earl's son, Lord Wilfrid, between you and the succession.

"I conjecture that you have not followed recent English news very closely; for, five weeks ago, while they were motoring near Biarritz, both your cousins, the earl and his son, together with Lord Wilfrid's wife, Lady Ethel, were killed instantly, by their machine striking a rock and swerving into a tree."

"Good God!—Abingdon, and Wilfrid, and Ethel—at once!"

"On receiving the mournful tidings, we took it for granted that your lordship would see the account of the accident in the American papers. Therefore we waited a fortnight for a cable from you. Then, on the advice of Mr. Barnside, I left England in search of your lordship."

"Never saw one word of it! Great God! Suppose I'd——" Arthur Bevon, ninth Earl of Abingdon, reflecting on his intentions of the previous night,

wiped the cold sweat from his brow, but forbore to finish his sentence.

"Well, sir, now that you have heard it all, permit me to offer my congratulations to your lordship, and to respectfully suggest that my firm would be very honored if you would be so good as to retain——"

"Oh, yes—yes, Kennedy! I sha'n't leave you. By the way, I believe one of you was called in at the time I came my cropper!— By gad, Kennedy, old Hugo might have been decenter over that affair!"

"His lordship was extremely careful with regard to money matters," responded the solicitor anxiously. "I trust your lordship will not attribute to us any of the arrangements that were made? And it is to be hoped that the condition of the estates inherited by your lordship may tend to reconcile your lordship to the—er—reticence of your cousin!"

"By Jove, that ain't so bad, Kennedy! How *am* I fixed, now I've come into it all?"

"Ah! It is quite a privilege to be the first to inform your lordship of the remarkable fortune left by our former client. The rents are worth about fifteen thousand pounds, at present; and there isn't an acre under mortgage. The property is absolutely clear. However, whenever you can give me an hour, your lordship, I shall be pleased to go over the whole situation with the papers entrusted to me."

"With every pleasure in life, Kennedy! Jove! Don't you pinch me for a bit. *I'd wake up!* And now, when we've shaken hands again, tell me how soon we can leave for home?"

"Ah! With due reference to your lordship's affairs here, it would be possible for your lordship to catch the boat on which I regret that I am compelled, in any case, to sail on Thursday next, for Liverpool."

"*You regret!* Regret leaving this damned country, Kennedy? Are you mad? Well, as for my affairs, if you can lend me two pounds on account, I'll engage to be ready to leave for

New York with you in exactly forty minutes."

"Ah, your lordship, I am much honored! But—I regret to state that I believe no train leaves here for New York until two o'clock this afternoon!"

It was five weeks later. In the smoking-room of the Evelyn Club, in Jermyn street, London, a little group of men, cigarettes in hand, brandy-and-sodas at elbow, were whiling away the hour before luncheon in listening to anecdotes of America, told by their reëlected member, the Earl of Abingdon, last known among them as "that genial ass, Bevon of the Guards." The earl himself was to entertain at luncheon that day one of the few big speakers of the Lords, together with the best whip of his party in the House. And the brilliant Lord X. was condescending to bore himself to this degree, for the reason that the affair of the Revised Revenue was coming up for vote within the fortnight, and his new recruit must be firmly annexed to the Conservative side.

Lord X. had no illusions about the earl. But to most of his old-time friends and connections Abingdon wore a halo of romance never suspected in the old-time comrade who, five years before, had, quite honorably and debonairly, run through with every ha'penny he possessed at baccarat, and then cut out for America and illusive millions.

Abingdon, good-natured though he was, had certainly acquired no little "side" during his three weeks' sojourn among his own. Today, as usual, he was recounting certain of those adventures in the "States," which, seeing that not a man he knew had ever been there, remained as incontrovertible as they were remarkable. Bear-hunts in the Rockies (he had never been west of Omaha), cattle-stampedes and prairie-fires on the plains, hold-ups of passenger-trains, even prospecting for gold in the company of an old pocket-miner, with whom, at last, he had been attacked

by Indians, bound, gagged, stripped of his gains, and left for dead in the hills, till a hunting-party had rescued him—all these things that had befallen him did Abingdon tell, quite quietly and calmly and with an admirable manner. But of bucket-shop losses, of road-mending, of cab-driving and of waiting at restaurant tables his glowing narratives contained no mention. However, so well did he describe his thrilling life that, during a whole hour, just one man left the group of eager listeners. This was a recent guest of the club, put up for a month only, who happened to be an unsuspected American. He, as he wandered off to the billiard-room, hands in pockets, muttered to himself, rather savagely:

"Is the cad an earl, even? Damned if I don't find out!"

It was two o'clock before the arrival of the Government whip put an end to the adventures. Abingdon carried his guests off to the dining-room, and placed them at a reserved table, where their *canapé* was awaiting them, flanked by an excellent cocktail. A little to his amazement, Abingdon tasted the familiar beverage with a faint pang, as of homesickness.

At this hour the dining-room was crowded, and the waiters were scurrying about in all directions. The caviare at Abingdon's table, however, was promptly succeeded by the bouillon, after which ensued a pause. The whip told one of his best anecdotes, which was applauded and then capped by Lord X. Still did the empty cups remain before them; and, while the host nobly took up the thread of the talk, a little spot of angry red began to flame on either cheek. After another five minutes he snapped his fingers at the head-waiter, who hurried across to him, heard his complaint, apologized obsequiously, and rushed away. Just as he reached the door leading to the kitchen those seated

near it heard a crash of falling china and a smothered exclamation. Nearly ten minutes after that Abingdon's waiter, white-faced and rigid-mouthed, emerged from those swinging-doors, a loaded tray in his arms. Hurriedly and awkwardly he laid the three portions of *sole au vin blanc* before the earl's guests. As he reached the host, Abingdon, who was by this time fuming with wrath, said to him in a low voice:

"By God! D'you know how long we've sat here waiting for this one course? You ruffian! How many hours d'you expect to keep gen——?"

His breaking off was very sudden. The cringing servant was placing some celery and olives before him in his individual dish, when, all at once, Abingdon noticed how the man's hand was trembling.

"Look here," he said, and his voice was strange, "look here! What happened?"

The man glanced at him, slightly surprised. Then he took courage.

"Please, your lordship, everything was ready ten minutes ago. But I had the misfortune to be hit by the swinging-doors; and—I—I dropped my tray. Please, your lordship, the Head has discharged me. I'm to leave when I've finished serving you."

By this time the unusual contretemps had attracted the attention of the two guests, Lord X. and the Government whip. It was with no little interest that they perceived the slow color creep up and up Abingdon's face, till his cheeks were a dull crimson. Then they saw him put his hand into his pocket and transfer what he removed to the astonished waiter. Lord X. perceived that the piece was not of silver. But, to his chagrin, he was quite unable to distinguish the words whispered by Abingdon to the delinquent man, which were simply:

"Come to my house in Grosvenor Square at ten tomorrow. I have a place for you there."



A CYCLE OF ROMANCE

By Seumas MacManus

THE rain which falls upon the just as well as the unjust, even in Connemara, mercifully deluged us only when we were in sight of a very comfortable-looking residence—the parsonage, we found it to be, the parsonage of the Rev. Mr. M'Daid. A kindly welcome, a roaring fire and a big dinner thoroughly compensated us for a wet jacket and a delayed journey. And we thanked God, and the good curate—and the good curate's wife, who was a charming hostess, indeed, and had won the hearts of all of us boys ere the meal was half through. When at the conclusion of the dinner she went off, with a smile and a bow, leaving us to smoke a comfortable pipe with her husband, we couldn't help expressing our genuine admiration for her, which pleased him exceedingly.

One of us said: "Your wife, sir, is surely an American?"

"You have guessed rightly," the curate replied.

"Then you have been to America?"

"I have never been to America," he said, with a laugh. "America has been to me."

"Oh!" we said.

"How long have you been cycling in this region?" Mr. M'Daid then asked.

We replied, "A week."

"And do you mean to tell me that you have been a week here and not heard how I got my wife?"

"Not a syllable." And we leaned forward interestedly.

Mr. M'Daid laughed. "It's queer that no one told you the story yet, for there's no jarvey in all Connemara but beguiles his tourists with my tale."

"We are heartily glad, then, that

no jarvey told it to us, because now we can have it at first hand."

Said the curate: "Did you observe the tandem bicycle that hangs in the hall as you came in?"

Yes, we had all observed it.

"Not very romantic looking, you might think—more particularly as the hind wheel is vilely buckled and out of shape."

We informed him that, far from the fact having escaped our notice, one of our party had intended volunteering to rectify the wheel for him before we left; for, even though the pattern of bicycle was decidedly old, we very well knew that a poor country curate was compelled to scorn fashion and novelty.

Said the curate: "I flatter myself on being a man of some Christian fortitude, who could patiently endure much, yet I am of opinion that I would shoot upon sight the man who dared to rectify that wheel. That is my Cycle of Romance.

"I am now," said the curate, "ten years in the Church, and a like number in Connemara. At the very outset of my career I was relegated to this district of Spiddal. I was a very modest, retiring, bashful young man, then, and for long after; and accordingly the more backward the country the better it suited my temperament. Spiddal suited me down to the ground. I saw none but a few scattered poor parishioners: I worked hard among them, and studied harder.

"When I came first I cast around for quiet and comfortable lodgings, and I found just the very thing I wanted, with a North-of-Ireland woman, a

Mrs. M'Crum, who had the principal place of business in the village, and who sold provisions, and drapery, and hardware, and almost everything else imaginable, and who had a big, rambling house with any number of rooms above her shops. And with her I settled down. Quiet and comfortable I said they were, and quiet and comfortable indeed they were, but for one thing.

"Like many North-of-Ireland people she was a bit near-going—they themselves would call it economical—and she tried to save in all things. One item that, owing to the size of her house and the number of rooms in it, cost her very much in the year was fire; and as a consequence, though I was very well pleased in everything else, I seldom, if ever, even in the coldest weather, got a real good fire to warm the marrow in my bones; though often enough, goodness knows, when I came in, cold and hungry, from a far and long drive through the mountains, I sorely needed it.

"She had a manager—a rollicking good fellow named Templeton—who roomed with me, and who, when opportunity offered, never failed, surreptitiously, to fetch up a burden of turf, pile them on our hearth, and, as he would say, 'Warm up the blood in your veins for once in your life, anyhow, even if the end of the world should come when Mrs. M'Crum happens in.' And indeed when we were so unfortunate as to be caught by her in the enjoyment of a fairly good blaze she would open upon us with an artillery of abusive language, scatter the fire at the imminent danger of burning us and the house, and threaten to scatter ourselves likewise if nothing would content us other than 'bonfires'—the title by which she designated every conflagration in our rooms to which more than three turf and a coal were contributed—at least Templeton used to insinuate that three turf and a coal was the limit allowed us, at any one time, for fire; and whenever we ourselves dared to venture anything in the shape of a sensible fire we got to

naming it, in melancholy jest, 'a bonfire.'

"Howsoever as, in our own quiet way, we learned to derive a good deal of quiet humor out of Mrs. M'Crum's fires and bonfires, we were, in a manner, compensated for the little deprivations we suffered, and, as I had nothing more serious to disturb my equanimity, I lived for three years, on the whole, a happy life enough at Mrs. M'Crum's frugal board. In the third year, too, I had attained to a bicycle, whereby my scanty income was economized, and by means of this bicycle I managed not only to attend well and thoroughly to all my duties, but likewise to make pilgrimages to most of the beauty spots—and they are many—of Connemara. And then I was happy, indeed.

"But in the fourth Autumn my equanimity was disturbed.

"In the month of September there was an unprecedented incursion of tourists into Spiddal, and the two hotels were crammed to overflowing so that when an American gentleman—a manufacturer from Pittsburg—Mr. Liedermann, with his daughter, arrived at Spiddal, making a tour of Ireland on a tandem bicycle, they could not for love or money get a room at either hotel; but, after making search of the village, found that Mrs. M'Crum was glad to receive them and place at their disposal as many rooms as they wanted.

"And into my sitting-room she brought them the very first evening they were under her roof, and introduced me to them as the curate of the place, and a man thoroughly well acquainted with all the scenery for twenty miles around, and a cyclist, moreover, who could lead them to every place that was worth visiting in Connemara. And Mrs. M'Crum generously volunteered the information that I would only be too happy to place my services at the disposal of the strangers.

"Mr. Liedermann said he was delighted to know this; that he intended to spend three weeks in Connemara, making Spiddal his centre, and it would be charming for him and his daughter, he was very sure, to have such a guide.

"Inwardly I groaned; but I was hypocrite enough to smile and assure them that I was at their service.

"As Americans will, Mr. Liedermann was by no means slow at taking advantage of my offer, and scarcely a day passed on which, whether I went upon duty or went upon pleasure, Mr. Liedermann and his daughter, on their tandem cycle, were not riding close upon my heels.

"I have said that I was shy, modest and retiring, and I can assure you that I felt these qualities, in all their cruellest force, during the first week of the Americans' stay.

"Miss Liedermann was a handsome girl, with all that vivacity that distinguishes her kind, and as the presence of any young lady was enough to put me out, the presence of this vivacious foreigner completely dumfounded me, and I felt—with all that poignancy which a man in such a position will feel it—that I was stupid, awkward and, in short, an ass. I several times wondered to myself whether or not this pretty and intelligent girl didn't feel like kicking me. Almost entirely I devoted myself and my conversation to her father, and only vouchsafed to Miss Liedermann the minimum of notice and attention that the merest politeness demanded. However, far from being disgusted with or put out by my manner, she, like most American girls, conducted herself as absolutely unaware of my shyness and stupidity, with the result that, ere half their stay was over, I was talking and attending to her as freely and as delightedly as if she were a man friend instead of my horrible aversion—a charming young woman. I got really interested in leading the pair of them to all the scenic nooks and corners that the average tourist failed to discover. And, delighted as I grew with our tours, Miss Liedermann's charmed interest grew apace, also, and she enthusiastically confessed that in all her life she had never had such a surpassingly delightful time.

"From that time forward I was at perfect and absolute ease with her. I

am even vain enough to venture to say that I occasionally shone in my conversation! and I used now to want to kick myself for being the ass that I had been the first week, and wondered how under the sun I could have been such in the presence of a girl whose manner was as easy as that of any man friend. I actually grew regretful as the period of their visit grew toward its close; and my regret was heartily shared by my two friends.

"The only thing which came to cloud my enjoyment was the fact that my old friend Templeton—at the occasional times when he got a minute in my presence—conveyed to me in whispers that 'Spiddal and all the world, old fellow, is speculating how soon yourself and Miss Liedermann will be getting buckled for good and all.' He told me the people admired her very much, and, as they loved me—for the poor people of every creed, I am proud to say, did, for some reason or other, love me affectionately—they were busy matchmaking and planning, and he told me, with a laugh, there was none busier speculating, and none more prophetic, than our buxom landlady and mistress, Mrs. M'Crum.

"This intelligence pained me sore; but, thank God, these rumors would soon be allayed, I reflected.

"For the final excursion I had reserved the most interesting attraction of all—the caves of Mullaghmore—and for the day before the departure this excursion of our little party was planned. But, as strange fortune would have it, Mr. Liedermann found himself compelled to journey to Galway city, on the evening before, to see a banker, and arrange some hitch that had occurred with regard to his letter of credit, and from Galway he could not have returned until late the following night. And they had already made arrangements ahead for journeying northwards on the day after. We all admitted that it was a bit of ill-luck, because, as they said, after hearing me descant so upon the charming interest of these caves, it would be a source of

perpetual regret that they hadn't seen them.

"'But why,' I asked, suddenly inspired, 'why may not Miss Liedermann, at least, see them?'

"'How is it to be done?' Mr. Liedermann asked.

"I said, 'I have never ridden a tandem; nevertheless, I think I can undertake to do my share of it. I can leave my own bicycle at home on tomorrow, and I will take your place on the tandem with Miss Liedermann.'

"And Miss Liedermann crowed joyously over the idea.

"'It is a very good plan,' said Mr. Liedermann. 'I'll be sorry, and very sorry, that I haven't seen them myself, but I am not selfish enough to wish Milly to lose the opportunity; so I wish you a delightful day.'

"And we were both sure that a delightful day it would be. And, indeed, a delightful day was in the morning portended, as, laden with gracious salutes from all by the way, Miss Liedermann and myself upon the tandem dashed off upon our pleasant excursion. And a delightful day it continued till we got to the caves, and had seen them through and through, and enjoyed them, and eaten our luncheon in them. When it was time to go we mounted our tandem again, and rode off, making a detour through the picturesque village of Cong on our way home.

"But, behold ye, before we reached Cong we encountered a thunderstorm, which, ere we sheltered, had partially drenched us, and—for misfortunes, you know, never come singly—as we labored through a heavy road into Cong I in my awkwardness managed to land our machine in an ugly rut, which doubled up our hind wheel in the picturesque fashion in which you still see it in the hall without. So we were in a plight.

"We picked ourselves up, and proceeded into the village, I managing to get the machine along some way or other. Then, in hopes that the rain might soon cease, we put up at the village inn; had a cup of tea; waited

an hour, an hour and a half, two hours. It had got on far in the afternoon. We would be already late in reaching home; so there was no more time to be lost. And as, on such an evening, a jaunting-car was out of the question, I, with much difficulty, managed to procure a superannuated coach, the owner of which, for a good round figure, engaged to leave us at Spiddal that night. But as the animal he would drive would, in all probability, be little less ancient than the conveyance, it would be difficult to say how late we might reach home; so, lest Mr. Liedermann should have arrived before us, or lest anyone else should be uneasy about us, I considered it a wise plan to send a wire before starting. And I accordingly telegraphed to friend Templeton, not forgetting, either, to warn him to have good fires for us. I was indeed afraid for Miss Liedermann lest she should incur a severe cold from the wetting she had had.

"I had correctly anticipated that our arrival should be late, indeed. It was ten o'clock when still we were within three miles of Spiddal. I urged our driver to whip up the antique thing which he drove and get us home at once.

"Miss Liedermann, after a little while, drew my attention to a blaze on a hilltop before us, and wished to know the meaning of it. I conjectured that some young fellows were burning whins. But we soon observed two other fires on two other hilltops. And then I inquired of our jarvey if any political prisoner had been released that day, or what was the particular cause of rejoicing.

"He felt pretty certain that no political prisoner had been released, and he was utterly ignorant, he assured us, of any particular cause of rejoicing. He said it must be something local.

"But I certainly had not heard of any local event before I left home in the morning. Something sudden must have turned up during the day, and some welcome intelligence been imparted to the people.

"Against the fires in the distance we

could see fleeting figures going round and round, proving to us that the people were rejoicing in numbers.

"When we got within a mile of our destination our driver informed us that there was a torchlight procession coming our way. I was now convinced that some most important development had occurred during our absence, and was burning with eagerness to know what it was. As the procession drew near, our jarvey by my directions pulled the coach to the roadside and drew up his horse to allow the procession room and fair play in passing. There was evidently some remarkable cause for jubilation. There appeared to be no less than four or five score of torchbearers; and the beating of drums and the strains of bands rose through the cheers of the multitude. When they neared us at least half-a-dozen young men, leaving the ranks, ran towards our coach, hastily peered into our faces, and instantly yelling at the top of their lungs, 'Here they are! Here they are!' sent up their hats into the air on top of a long, loud and deafening cheer, in which the vast multitude joined.

"Before my companion and I had recovered from the shock of amazement that seized us, the crowd made a rush for the coach, unyoked the animal that pulled us, and, getting hold of the shafts and traces, set off at a trot toward Spiddal, hauling us along whilst the great crowd closed around the coach, back and front and sides, waving torches, hats and sticks, banging drums, blowing horns, yelling and screaming deafeningly.

"Poor Miss Liedermann was not less astounded, dumfounded, than myself.

"As soon as I recovered presence of mind to do so, I leaned from the coach and bawled and beckoned to those who drew us to halt. But they only shook their heads and smiled, and cheered again. And the louder I bawled and the more frantically I beckoned the more emphatically did they motion their refusal, the broader

did they smile, and the louder still did they yell and cheer.

"What in the name of heaven does this mean, anyhow?' I frenziedly appealed to those who ran close beside the carriage.

"Three cheers for him!' one would reply.

"And three cheers for the both of them!' from another.

"And then peal after peal went up, till nine consecutive volleys rolled to the bitter end.

"As we came near the town the gathering increased, and the cheering grew louder and longer, and more deafening still, till, exhausted and unable to make myself heard, I sat back in the carriage, in despair, and mopped my brow.

"I was utterly unable even to look Miss Liedermann in the face. I grew cold and hot by turns. But again and again I arose and leaned out of the window and still more frantically besought the yelling multitude to let me know what they meant by it at all, at all. But each succeeding time I leaned out was only a signal for the roaring throng to strain their lungs to bursting as they strove to out-bellow themselves.

"And when at last we reached the village, and reached Mrs. M'Crum's, and the scoundrels drew the coach up, and I thought my agony was at length at an end, I found that I was forcibly imprisoned, whilst, through a lane which opened in the crowd, a number of the more mature and sensible citizens came forward, with one in front who bore a sheet of foolscap. When he reached the coach door, by simply raising his hand, he stilled the pandemonium that my loudest yelling had been powerless to affect, and, with solemn face, while I, in my carriage seat, lay back in a state of collapse, he began to read something in this wise:

"Reverend and dear sir, may it please you, we, of your congregation, as well as citizens of every creed and class, and every shade of political opinion, in this ancient and honorable village of Spiddal, having now had the

happiness of your ministrations, of your guidance, and of your prized society during thirty-six months' residence among us, wherein every man, woman and child has grown to love, honor and esteem you, do humbly and respectfully beg to tender to you our heartiest welcome and our most grateful felicitations, on this never-to-be-forgotten occasion of your fetching home your charming, beautiful and accomplished bride.'

"For my part, boys, I know no more of what was read out of that document, for I heard no more. And I don't know how I got out of the coach, or how I got free of the crowd, or how I got into the house; but the next thing I can remember was the ample Mrs. M'Crum embracing and kissing first Miss Liedermann and next my bewildered self, wishing us many and long years of wedded happiness and bliss, and many other calming and reassuring compliments.

"I got my tongue at length, and I said: 'In the name of all that's wonderful, Mrs. M'Crum, has everybody in Spiddal been qualifying for the madhouse?'

"I believe,' said she, 'they have, and it's little wonder they would. But,' she added, with a shake of her head and a roguish twinkle in her eye, 'you're the sly rascal to go and do it so quietly, and to manage Mr. Liedermann out of the road so well. However, excuse me just now; I am off to get you your bit of supper. Let me tell you,' she went on, coming a step backwards into the room again, 'that it was just by a miracle that there was one in Spiddal to receive you or give you a cheer, for when you wired to Mr. Templeton you didn't know that he had gone off the day to Galway, and isn't yet back, any more than Mr. Liedermann; but I, having a presentiment (that, between ourselves, has been with me for more than a week back), ventured to open the telegram, and learned how matters stood. Good

luck to you both,' she concluded and smiled herself out.

"I gazed bewilderedly round the room. On the table a telegram was lying. I snatched it up, opened it, and read it. It was, sure enough, the very telegram I had despatched, word for word; but when I read it, now, in the light of later events, I said, 'M'Daid, you *are* an ass!' The wording was:

"'Templeton, Spiddal.

"'Got buckled at Cong. Home by coach at ten. Bonfires.

"'M'DAID.'

"Miss Liedermann had ventured to look at the telegram over my shoulder. For the first time I now looked up in her face, with the intention of confessing my asinine stupidity most abjectly and throwing myself on her mercy. To my amazement her eyes were puckered in a smile—a smile which gradually overspread her face—and next moment she had thrown herself into a chair and broken into a rippling laugh.

"I said appealingly, 'Miss Liedermann, do you not feel like withering me up with a look?'

"'Not by any means,' she answered; 'I should be very sorry.'

"'Then,' I said abjectly, 'it is that you are so merciful as only to feel pity for me?'

"'I feel pity,' she replied, bursting with laughter; 'but my pity is for those disappointed poor people. Imagine the plight of the poor souls!' she said, with highly amused, but genuine sympathy—'imagine!'

"Her manner had so suddenly reassured me that I had the temerity to say instantly, 'And pity it is that they should be disappointed.'

"Well, boys, when Mrs. M'Crum bustled in, some minutes later, I remarked to her: 'You will have to send word among the people, Mrs. M'Crum, that there has been a slight mistake. The day of our marriage will not be fixed till Mr. Liedermann has returned from Galway.'"

MR. X.

By Richard Butler Glaenzer

“**G**REAT water—blue as sky—like Parrish—Maxfield Parrish, eh?”

It was astonishing; so astonishing that the interrogative form of the words lost its significance. The water was blue indeed. There was nothing strange in its being so qualified. The water which washes the Florida coast is of a superlative blue that may well elicit superlative admiration. Not even a Florida sky can rival it. It was not, therefore, the question that astonished, but the fact that somehow it had come from the lips of Mr. X. Had the words issued from one of the big, red-mouthed ventilators, I might have been startled, but surprise would have been replaced a moment after by a twentieth-century stolid acceptance of the marvelous, and two minutes later my notebook would have recorded as another idiosyncrasy of the Gulf Stream the fact that it induces in the steamer ventilator articulate and intelligible expression. But here more than a marvel had occurred. It was a miracle by which a few simple words seemed not so much to have been spoken as to have become detached from the speaker, for all the world as if thought had slipped over the borderland of silence, stumbling into speech through sheer embarrassment.

“Yes, yes! Blue indeed!” I at last managed to reply.

His eyes became very round, as if in sudden realization of a blunder, or was it in perplexity over the unsympathetic abruptness of my tardy answer?

The first two days out of port had been more than chilly; the captain had

declared them cold, with a vehemence that did credit to his calling. Cape Hatteras had kicked up a nasty sea, which drove the majority of the passengers to their cabins. But before this I had drawn my own conclusions, having shared in that exchange of glances which characterizes a first meal on shipboard. There was the smart Yankee, the aggressive Hebrew, the proud Irishman, the ponderous German, all of them, from the snobbish altitude of a profession, unmistakably salesmen of the traveling class—all save the women, a scattering of invalids, one pedagogue and Mr. X.

It was at my first breakfast that I became aware that this must be, could be none other than Mr. X. Nor was it through necessity that I adopted this symbol of the unknown. To be sure, there was no passenger-list, but the purser was a garrulous fellow, who would have eagerly satisfied a less innocent curiosity. The want of a name was no more than a pretext. I was influenced rather by what may be termed a feeling that in each and every way, physically, mentally and morally this must be an Unknown Quantity; at first a little more than a feeling, an impression, later a deep-seated belief.

As I faced him at table, I became fascinated by the cleverness with which he avoided being tricked into the most ordinary forms of speech. He would use a finger rather than his tongue to direct the steward to his service, eating solemnly the while, as though impressed with the dignity of mastication, or inspecting a fork with the frowning attention which is or-

dinarily directed upon a problem of metaphysics. Once my eyes met his—gentle, thoughtful eyes, they seemed—but in a flash red lids closed upon them, and I felt myself flushing with the shame of one who has been guilty of a gross impertinence.

The first days, I have said, had been cold; nor did this tend to create more than ordinary friendliness among the few men who walked the deck or patronized the smoking-room. It was, no doubt, this lack of good-fellowship which gave me so much leisure, and with it the opportunity to study the behavior of this Unknown Quantity; to observe the eccentricities of Mr. X. After all, were these so much eccentricities as they were differences between A and B? Here was a man not so very different in appearance from any other man—in point of fact, rather less different—with colorless hair and red lids as his most striking features. But added to these was a grim, unconditional silence as a distinguishing trait. And this silence, it must be admitted, was at times disconcerting. More than once I had seen him shrink from a passer-by, with a countenance expressive of something akin to fear, and could it have been other than fear of a collision which might necessitate a spoken apology? There was something appalling in a diffidence which even the sea could not dissipate. For when the wind whistles to the roar of surging waters, to the merry rise and fall of a stanch ship, the world of petty conventions, of silly, vulgar what-not, dwindles into insignificance, and man speaks to man frankly and without reserve. But Mr. X. would not or could not break down the barriers of custom—or was it habit? For three long days he leaned uncomfortably against the stern rail, gazing upon the wake and its attendant sea-gulls—for three whole days silent and alone, although upon the third the sun shone warm upon calmer, bluer waters, through which we ploughed so steadily that noon found the decks alive with knots of people ready to cast aside rugs, coats and all

traces of formality. The Spirit of Detachment, that good genius of the ocean, was beginning her reign of disclosure, wherein thoughts are exchanged with childlike unconsciousness and hearts beat with unaccustomed freedom.

It was upon the next, the fourth day, that the miracle occurred, and following close upon it that rapid succession of almost incredible events which were to lead to an even more inexplicable climax.

Mr. X. had deserted his post at the stern for the starboard rail, and I, standing no more than a yard away, became for the time being oblivious of his presence, as I surrendered myself to the marvels of sky and water. The sea, bejeweled with countless minute ripples, was a liquid mosaic of blue and green, of turquoise and of chrysoprase. Over the surface skimmed flying-fish transformed into white doves by the light of the sun. A low line of shore, showing in strata yellow sand, dark brush and an occasional tuft of palms, melted away to south and to north, where were circling the last trailing bubbles of smoke from an invisible locomotive. Indescribably flat was the coast as though prostrate before a hot vapor which had stolen from the swamps of the interior to serve as a yellow fringe for the robes of the sky. Overhead these were blue, flawless blue, save for a few filmy clouds which skirted the horizon, soon leaving the heavens to a solitary buzzard that clung to us mile upon mile flapping lazily with great serrated wings, which seemed silhouetted into so many indices of death and corruption.

"Wonderful water—bluer than sky—Parrish out-Parrished!" Mr. X. was insisting. I had read somewhere that no Englishman had ever been able to win the V.C. a second time. Yet here was a mere American, who not only repeated an act of sublime courage, but even exaggerated it to an antagonistic degree. It was a second miracle in the form of a challenge.

"Beautiful, indeed, my dear sir," I hazarded; then, taking courage, "but

why wonderful? Nature if anything is natural, and, being natural, how may it be full of wonder, when wonder itself presupposes the supernatural? As for Parrish, when has Nature allowed herself to be bullied into inferiority by Art? Sir, we are approaching the home of that tiny animal, the coral-builder, which produces finer blue than all the paint-pots of Paris."

I gasped for breath, knowing myself to be a pedant in search of epigrams and not least a fool. Did there not stand at my very side the supernatural natural? For a moment he gazed upon me with pardonable astonishment; the next we were launched upon a discussion which carried us from art to literature, from literature to philosophy, from philosophy to religion, from religion to science and from science back to art. It was thrust and parry and all the delight of it, he, free from all restraint; I, forgetting the marvel of it. His words no longer danced with their early cinematographic brevity; they followed one another slowly and carefully, moving unflinchingly to the point of proof; and in themselves, by their goal, disclosed more than a mere fine acquaintance with books. It was a keen interest in life; a knowledge of its quagmires; and how hard a struggle in them.

We had just been congratulating each other over the reasonableness of our single attitude toward infant damnation, when I recalled the remark of an English wit that men always discuss the most important things with total strangers. The idea had seemed preposterous, yet it became humiliatingly sane in the light of existing events. I could not restrain a smile which assumed the proportions of laughter as I beheld myself, the spectator of an hour ago, indulging in mental gymnastics for the benefit of a clam, a man of incredible silence. Mr. X. showed signs of concern. After some hesitation, I defined my position and confessed my curiosity. There followed one of those outpourings

which nothing can explain. I have never been a man to invite confidences; rather, have I avoided them; but this man presented all the fascinations of the Fourth Dimension. Quite shamelessly, yet in all kindness, I inserted little phrases of encouragement. Eagerly I listened to the unburdening of a soul. Pieced out, it was a simple story—a rather ordinary one for our land of lowly origins. But it differed in this: who would have sought the soul of a dreamer and not a little of the poet behind red lids that had belonged to a comparatively unschooled newsboy, the son of a German peasant woman, the son of a—? Ah! that was the question.

"A plain old scrubwoman, my mother," he muttered, half to himself, with eyes fixed upon the foul-winged buzzard; "an honest, simple woman who knew more about floors than about spelling; but she gave me a little help with letters while she lived—that wasn't long—with the hot steam of the scrub-pail, a hacking cough and a few long Winters down East."

I led him from this early sordidness with relief. There were years of struggle; first for food, then for education, later for wealth enough to enjoy them both. Periods of brooding were they, accompanied by diffidence and not a little silence; for there was the blot of uncertain, if not altogether irregular, parentage. The father had been a sailor. That was all he had contrived to draw from his mother. Further inquiries brought nothing but tears. With advancing years came the increasing doubt, the aggravated bitterness, the melancholy of a secret hugged in silence. Riches came at last; not in the six figures, but plenty for one who lacked a wife, a father, mother or sister with whom to enjoy them. The order of the relationship was significant; for a time came when the lack of a father seemed as nothing to the lack of a wife. Through the eyes of maturity pride became of minor importance. Yet again with the very longing for companionship returned the old struggle: the doubt in

his own mother, the question of his legitimacy, the greater diffidence engendered by habitual silence, but always, most fearful of all, the doubt—that poisonous doubt in the goodness, the purity of woman. There had been a year of the torment which is endured by every being who buries his thoughts and allows them to ferment until they become nerve-destroying and almost stifle the soul that harbors them.

Then, presto! the trick of a curl or the sweep of lashes, and one morning Mr. X. found himself snared in the meshes of that same curl, laid low by the curve of those same lashes. This was hardly his way of putting it; for it was by disjointed allusions rather than direct statements that he revealed how a man of forty had discovered his love for a girl of barely eighteen; how, by a new system of logic, woman's virtue had become a postulate; how a wealthy employer had persuaded a poor stenographer (his own!) to become his wife. I did not realize what dawned upon me later, that only the forced propinquity of office relations could have made it possible for Mr. X. to open his mouth to a woman.

There was the mere mention of a wedding. Later, by a series of apparently innocent questions, I came upon the loss of a child—a boy that had lived just long enough to make the man's present childlessness the more pitiful. I felt like a prying brute.

"But your wife—pardon me—what a pity she could not accompany you," I ventured.

"Yes! a great shame—rather ailing, poor child—can't stand long trips. You see, I have to look after hides and rice out there," pointing to the west. "Business is business." He did not seem to resent or to notice the irrelevancy of my question. Yet I, on the other hand, found it difficult to reconcile the lover of a few minutes past with the dealer in hides and rice. Then off we darted again into the delights of argument, discussing the last book of Henry James, the development of architecture in America, the secret of

that simplicity which dominates the Japanese color print; and then, heaven knows why, I asked him point-blank if he had read "*Cosmopolis*." I presume it was the warmth of the air, the Southern quality of the sky, suggesting Italy; or perhaps our reference to James, which had stirred up memories of that other realist, his admirer.

"By Bourget, isn't it?" he inquired. "No, but I have just finished a study of his called '*L'Eau Profonde*.'" It would no longer have astonished me to hear that Mr. X. was acquainted with the *Barsas-Breiz* in the original. I quite expected to learn that Koptic and the dialects of all Five Nations formed part of a newsboy's education.

"Yes, Bourget," I assented. "'*L'Eau Profonde*?' Let me see—I think I've—yes! I have it. Valentine is suspected by her husband—of——"

"That is quite it," he interrupted, with a frown; "and it is just that which I dislike in the average French novel: a plot always founded on some such suspicion, some low intrigue, some——"

"But, my dear man," I broke in for the sake of argument, "will you for one moment deny the reality of such suspicions? Dare you insist that such intrigue is absent from any sphere of life? Was it not you yourself who told me of hours of torture, years of torment over a single doubt that concerned, if you will pardon me, a father and mother long dead? Think of your state of mind if that doubt became a suspicion which touched your own wife!"

"Do you really believe," he retorted, "that such conditions are improved by their discussion in print?"

"They exist, however," I insisted. "They are vital facts, and how often does their discussion teach a much needed lesson, the folly of uncontrolled passion, nor the lesser folly of revenge by murder, which is but capping madness with madness."

"If you knew how I loathe the subject!" he pleaded; "not that I am so narrow-minded as to deny that it deals with living facts. The lesson may be, as you say, a valuable one; but as for

what you term murder, I call it scant justice. There are times when God must let man punish in man's way, and shame to him who does not make quick work of the cur who deserves no trial by men, and the slut who is too low for the gossip of women."

His vehemence was amazing. I tried to calm him. I questioned the reasonableness of such bitterness.

"Bitter? And why shouldn't I be bitter? Consider what I have suffered through doubt! But for facts—do you think I would be satisfied to *suffer*? You're wrong, man. That's the time I would act. What man would not act? Why, with my own hands I'd strangle the two creatures that were vile enough to merit it—and God forgive me for saying it!" He became silent and brooding once more.

The sun had sunk behind the black line of the coast. The yellow fringe of the heavens had turned to a gold that was streaked with bands of pink, blue and violet—indefinable, soft and blending, as should be the flowering rows of a garden, the last gift of the sun-god to his sweetheart, Mistress Florida. Gloomily shoreward flew the evil-winged buzzard, its foul body penetrating the glory of the west like a black beetle eating into the heart of a yellow rose.

"My good friend," at last resumed Mr. X., "I have acted like a madman. Forgive me and only remember that I am very glad, very glad indeed to have met you—to have spoken with you. If you should chance to visit Benton—Benton, Massachusetts, be sure and look me up. We shall be delighted to see you—my wife will be delighted to know you."

He produced a visiting-card. At that moment the gong called us to dinner. We passed into the saloon, I inquiring whether Benton were not the great centre of shoe industries. As he replied in the affirmative, I placed the card in my pocket, promising him one of my own in exchange.

That night was as beautiful among nights as the day had been among days. It swept away light with all

the sudden imperiousness of the tropics and in an instant was sparkling with myriads of winking stars—stars that possessed distinct color and form. The air was so still that the black smoke from the funnel rose dense and undisturbed, barely deviating from the line of our course. Except for the throb of the engine and the gentle breeze produced by our motion, the ship might have been lying at anchor on a sheltered lagoon. It was a night for dreams, and the few people who were on the hurricane deck stood apart, like myself, silently gazing into the heart of mystery, or conversed in undertones, as if the calm were a fragile crystal to be shattered by a jarring word. The eastern horizon grew pale, uncovered a rim of silver, and lo! in all the splendor of perfection there emerged a disk, cool from the sea—a moon that floated upward like a soap-bubble breathed upon by the children of heaven—their plaything and the delight of lovers! Low ripples born of our motion glittered and vanished and glittered again, till at last our ship swung to the west. Then in the churning wake sported the moonbeams, twinkling with radiance, leaping and dancing with the sheen of joyousness. And once more silence, unbroken save for the pumping of piston-rods and the swish of divided waters!

It was late when I was roused from my reverie by a voice at my elbow. I recognized it as belonging to a good-natured Irishman with an innocent countenance and the smooth tongue of his race.

"Were you star-gazing, sport?" he inquired jovially. "Ah! come and join the boys up forward. There's wine being opened. It'll be doubling your stars." And he laughed that deep rich laugh which, I had found, lurked always near the surface.

The man's name? In the familiarity-producing warmth of the preceding day we had dubbed him Kilkenny, for that was his birthplace, he had proudly declared. I rather curtly refused the invitation, but he would not be rebuffed and it ended with my being

dragged off to the lower deck, where, by a hatchway near the bow, champagne corks were popping merrily.

First it was wine alone; then song, jest and anecdote well sprinkled with wine; and at last, yarn upon yarn, punctuated with frequent chuckles and guffaws. Though the tales of one "Texas," a raw-boned plainsman, were no better than they should be, they were delivered with a Southern drawl and an unsmiling dryness of expression which did much to divest them of vulgarity. Not so those of Kilkenny, who, not to be outdone, now discoursed with a glibness which the wine did not tend to abate, and with a frankness which at no time might be mistaken for discretion. Wishing to be spared the necessity of offending the man, whose distressing revelations suggested the confessions of a naive prodigal rather than the inventions of a Don Juan, I tried to divert his interest from personal conquests to stories of the sea. His friends of the road, however, found more entertainment in women than in storm, and so, perceiving myself overruled, I prepared to leave.

It was then that all thoughts of departure were removed by the one word "Benton."

"Say, boys, you know Benton," he was saying, "the hole where me old man ships from? Well, say, it was a queer one happened to me there. You can talk about swells and boodle and all that hinkiey dink, but it's a blue eye and a little blarney that does the work every time. My boss, he says to me one day, 'Jack, go up Benton way and shake 'em up a little; give it to 'em straight and tell 'em—' There! ye know the kind of talk. It was hot as hell when I got into the bum little shack they call the Benton House. There was nothing around but flies and farmers at that sason, so when I was after finding me man gone for two days I cursed like me father when he swallowed his thirrd tathe. 'Jack, me bhoy,' says I, 'ye're a fool if ye roast on this excuse for an oven'—maning the porch; 'ye're an idjit if

ye move off it looking for a cooler place that isn't; but,' says I, 'be an idjit every time, if it's more excitin'.' So off I walk, lads, down the main street, looking for a trolley car to fit the tracks; and findin' none in the vishinity at last I trust to me own pins to pick me honored self to the top of the hill I see above me."

Kilkenny's friends plainly showed their flagging interest and I my relief. But he detected both expressions and leaped to the point. "And there I saw the purtiest pair of shoes I ever sold in Texas. 'Where?' ye're askin'. On her feet! 'Whose?' ye'll be inquiren'. Why, Mrs. Me Friend's—the lady as was lyin' on her back in the grass with her nose sniffin' around the wurks of a blarsted, bloomin' haristocratic wite and gold hautymobile. Beg pahdon, a motor-car, hit his, sir." This final cockney thrust, following the incident of the shoes in his most unconscious Irish-American brogue, convulsed us all.

"Don't ye be laughin'; that's what the dummed English frog-eyed, leather-bound chiffer told me it was the next day. 'Ma'am,' says I—to the shoes, of course—'are ye lookin' for samthin' or is it samthin' that's chasin' ye?' Ye ought to see her wriggle out, and Holy Mother, it was Jack that wanted to wriggle in. But there! it manes only a nate bit of smoothness to quiet the darlin's, and in the time it'd take yer father to swallow his first grog ye'd have seen yer Jack talkin' like a brother to the swatest little pache y'ever held upon yer knee. My! but she was purty—gray eyes, yellor hair and a waist like me Aunt Bridget's ring, and she all of thirty—on her own wurr! It takes one of them smellin' divils of rubbernecked lockymotives with samthin' gone crooked in its vitals to bring folks together. Well, we were friends, sure enough; and by the time me man was back to town I had enjyed two days of naughtymobilin' that would make your eyes dance a can-can. How did I do it? Well, bhoys, it was this way. Ye see, hubby was an old stuff, as sour and silent as a crab; an

old chump with rocks, who wanted more rocks and thought his purty little wife ought to be content as long as she got part of thim to spind. So off goes hubby chasin' the hide and turnin' it into dollars; and off goes wifey, flyin' around in a motor-car, till an accident brings her a Jack to tell her that she is the dairest little thing that ever was made for a man to coddle. Then, out of her head pop rocks, hubby and everythin' but the likin' to be called swate. And there ye have the beginnin'! And, of course, bhoys, if ye have an open-faced machine, with delicate wurks, it's 'hall the heasier'; for there be times when the two of ye must look close at the wan thing; and there be times when ye naidn't, but do; and then there be times—ah, go 'long with ye; ye know it all like a book, and so I'll be closin' the story of Milly and Jack, before ye be makin' me blush. But come, if ever ye go up to Benton, just get thim to pint out the house of the richest old plutochrat in town. Then stand by the gates, and when a hunk of white and gold comes kechunkin' around the curvve take a long look at it. If a pache with yellow flyaway hair is in the box, *that* is the Rale Gurrl; and *this*," said he, with eyes turned insolent and a finger pointing to his chest—"this is the Rale Bhoys!"

I rose in disgust and started to leave the group, when I found myself in the shadow of a man, who stood not ten feet behind the spot where I had been sitting. His face, turned toward the moon, was averted, but the contour of the head was familiar. No sooner did I realize who it was than I became the victim of as great fear as I have ever experienced. Suddenly there leaped into existence a horrible suspicion, a theory that gradually took shape from the unconscious association of two incidents. It was too horrible a nightmare for this God-given night; and yet it was I and no victim of a dream who shivered when the solitary listener raised his hands to his brow and slowly extended them against the silvery light of the moon. Still, could it be I, the passionless observer,

who discovered in the gesture a fantastic suggestion of that foul-winged buzzard which had carved its death-like course into the West a few hours past?

I lacked the courage to speak. There was no question I might ask. There was no man to whom I might appeal for advice. Any move on my part would be received as an indication of madness. It was maddening; it was terrifying; yet I was helpless. Should I walk the decks and await or avert the impossible? Whom should I warn, and of what? And so, in a torment of doubt, I left him standing bathed in the pure white rays, which in the earlier evening had stirred in my mind no thoughts but those linked with beauty and calm.

I have often wondered how I succeeded in closing my eyes that night. For ages, I seemed to lie with ears strained to catch some sound that might justify my fears. At last toward dawn a breeze sprang up, and with the gentle rise and fall of the ship came sleep. The mental strain of those agonizing hours must have exhausted me, for the morning gongs failed to make their usual impression. It was my table-steward who at last made himself heard at my door, and I was hardly awake when there came a knock and I found myself confronted by the purser. His customary genial expression was replaced by a dazed look which realized my worst fears.

"Pardon me, sir," he explained, "but this is very serious business—very serious. Saw you speaking yesterday afternoon with a passenger—sits—*sat* opposite you at table. Thought you might know something about him."

I did not need to ask, but nothing was left for me but to inquire whether anything was wrong with the man.

"Wrong, sir? Very wrong! He's missing—not at breakfast—steward went to see—not in cabin—berth untouched—not on ship—gone, sir—absolutely gone!" This, with all the incoherence of amazement.

He continued to look at me, as if

something incredible had occurred. "Gone, sir!" I repeated mechanically.

"Yes, gone—gone, sir!" he reiterated, with puerile insistence; "gone overboard, but there was no sea, and, if *he* did it, why, last night—why, last night? What was wrong? Queer, sir—very queer—foul play, perhaps!" He fixed me searchingly.

I expressed my astonishment, my sympathy; I told him the matter was a mystery to me. I knew I lied, but what was there to tell? There was one question which I longed to ask, yet which for my own safety I dared not risk. But the moment I was dressed and on deck I tried to answer it for myself by covering every inch of the ship in search of Kilkenny. I could not find him nor had any of his friends seen him that morning. It was with a sense of mingled satisfaction and guilt that I dwelt upon his absence. My suspicions might be groundless, but if correct—oh, where, indeed, were my arguments of the preceding day?

Pondering over the mystery of life and death and the inconsistency of human nature, my tired eyes refreshed themselves with the one thing which never changes: the beauty of nature, and, most lovely of all, its unfettered seas. Again I rejoiced in the cerulean water, more than ever changing in tone as it varied in depth. I could still hear ringing in my ears the words of Mr. X.: "Great water—blue as sky—

like Parrish—Maxfield Parrish, eh?" They had evoked such surprise; and yet how much more remarkable events had occurred than the unsealing of silent lips! But after all, was there anything so marvelous as the undying glory of these waters, as the magic of this air by which the distant town of Key West was made to rest upon the rim of the world like a Western Venice or a Dream City of Poets? Then suddenly, as if once more to overthrow my every theory, I was slapped on the back and greeted with a, "Well! well! well! and how did the wine treat you, old man? I feel doped!"

When I found myself confronting Kilkenny, sleepy-eyed, but smiling as usual, I knew that at heart it was I who had been the murderer. There was nothing to explain and very little to say, but my cool reception had its effect.

"Awful affair, isn't it?" he exclaimed, with appropriate soberness. So he knew, then; but how much did he know?

"Crazy thing to do," he muttered half to himself. "A man must be out of his head—no sensible man would—yes, that's it—either mad or a coward." He paused; then turning to me, "Who was he, anyway? Man, do you know who he was?"

"Yes," said I, "I know who he was. Do you?" And my eyes never left his face as I handed him the card of Mr. X.



RETROSPECTION

By Edwin L. Sabin

SAINT VALENTINE knocked at my bachelor heart,
Where Cupid, the sloth, had been idle;
And bade me to take in sweet doings a part,
And whispered of maid and of bridal.

And here's to that saint with prerogatives quaint,
And here's to that maiden compelling,
And here's to that bridle (and ne'er a complaint)
Though changed, it may be, in the spelling.

"HAIL, SOCIAL LIFE!"

By Anna A. Rogers

"FEED ME WITH FOOD CONVENIENT
FOR ME"

"I SUPPOSE we've got to go!" groaned little Mrs. Carpenny, staring at the open fire, around which they had gathered after dinner, a fairly contented family until the note came which now lay shattered and rifled on the hearth-rug.

"Got to go!" Ridiculous nonsense! That Jaynes woman isn't a queen, although the Lord made her ugly enough to be a very virtuous one." Mr. Carpenny spoke in a hard, combative tone, frowning over the evening paper at his pretty, young wife, quite as if he detested her, which at times was not the fact.

"When people make the effort, Ben, we certainly——"

"Well, we'll spare her the effort, all right!"

"But don't you think Billy Jaynes is lots of fun?" asked Miss Marian Carpenny in her softest purr.

"Lots!" snorted her elder brother; whereupon for some reason the others united in a laugh. Marian flashed an oblique look around the domestic arc, and then dropped her pale, sweet glance into the glowing coal. The greenish glint in her eyes was suggestive of a cat, rather sleepy, but sufficiently alert for professional purposes, should the occasion present itself.

Then Benjamin Carpenny proceeded to make further display of certain eccentricities of temper for which he was famed. He was an egotist without complacency, which was never intended by a just God. He was well-to-do, but discounted it by unexpected attacks of stinginess; he was irritable,

and yet filled with an endless craving for tenderness, which he was as secretive about as if it were a sin. In fact, a nature which refuses to compose into any recognizable portrait—which, if the exact truth were painted, might also be seen of others.

"Billy Jaynes," he went on to remark, trying to fix his sister Marian's shifting eyes, "is about as perfect a specimen of the genus *Homarus vulgaris*, commonly called lobster, as ever wiggled on an imitation marble counter! And what's more to the point, that suburban home of his, that they put on such side about, is seventeen miles from where we sit, as the trolley flies, as you'll find out, if you're fools enough to go."

"Trolley! But what's seventeen miles in the new car, Ben?" cried Mrs. Carpenny, suddenly possessed with a strong desire to go to the Jaynes's dinner.

"You'll find the new car on that particular February evening in the garage. If you think I'd take her out in all this slush, along new roads, you don't know me, that's all!" And the family knew that an attack of thrift was impending, and the wife vowed that she would go to the dinner, afoot if need be! But not before the usual skirmishing.

"What's the matter with hiring one?" she asked coldly.

"Fifteen or twenty dollars is matter enough! For Millicent Jaynes's cooking? Your memory is poor. We could do so much better at a café for less." Benjamin jammed the tobacco down into his pipe-bowl with a vigorous thumb as he spoke.

"'Hail, social life!'" drawled the young man, hitherto silent, who was sprawling in a low leather chair, smoking.

"'A tabble dote is different from orderin' aller cart!' You fellows may have the former—with my fraternal blessing—and I'll 'aller cart' to the club." Van Buren Carpenny spoke cheerfully, smiling with affection at the end of his half-smoked cigar.

"If we've got to go to that damned dinner, you'll go too, you'd better believe, young man!" suddenly thundered the family "Fafner," and the cheerfulness began to fade out of Van Buren's jolly young face.

Then and there somehow they all knew that the question of the Jaynes's dinner was decided, and the sisters-in-law exchanged cautious glances. The exceptionally pleasant relations between the two women was founded on Benjamin's deficiencies of character, which demanded an habitually apologetic attitude on the part of his sister toward his wife.

Mrs. Carpenny had consented to join domestic forces with her husband's two young relations, after two years of living with him without them.

She found that their presence somehow conserved what remained of the connubial habit.

After Ben's explosion there followed around that library fire one of those long silences that serve to make every home at least mentally recuperative.

Then Benjamin slapped his paper into position and muttered savagely:

"Why the devil can't people let each other alone in this world? Confounded piece of impudence, I call an invitation like that! Northern end of Nowhere, and——"

"I wonder who's asked to meet us?" interrupted Marian, as American sisters, unshackled by the law of primogeniture, never hesitate to do their older brothers.

"Think on the sad Four Hundred's gilded halls, Whose endless Leisure e'en themselves appals," murmured Van softly to himself.

"It doesn't make an iota of differ-

ence who is there! A dinner is a dinner—the biggest fool invention of civilization!" came from within the paper cave of the dragon.

Then Van threw off his momentary melancholy and sought to dispel the domestic doldrums.

"I once heard an Italian say that his idea of heaven was to sit forever at the head of his dinner-table, surrounded by his friends, while behind his chair should stand, forever, his worst enemy 'to pairform for me my digestions,' as he put it."

The women laughed, and "Oh, an Italian!" came from Benjamin in an invidious snort.

"The fundamental trouble with a dinner," continued Van, who was easily encouraged, "is that a fellow can't get any perspective on you women. And you all need perspective—lots of it! Dinners prevent more marriages!—have prevented eight or nine in my case alone! After the third course I'm for celibacy! Under our very noses for three hours until every man's soul fairly gasps for breath."

"Somebody says, 'for love to get well started really needs propinquity,'" quoted his sister, trailing her golden eyelashes demurely.

"The manipulation of propinquity is a most delicate question, my child, and decides the difference between a charming woman and a dead albatross dragging on a fellow's collar."

"Your attitude toward women is nothing short of insulting, Van!" laughed his sister-in-law.

"I've often wondered if that's why you're all so fond of me?" the youngster said thoughtfully, whereupon "Fafner" snorted and thrashed the newspaper right and left as if it were a live thing.

As the four Carpenneys sat about the glowing coals it was slowly borne in upon them that they were drifting helplessly toward the horror of that suburban dinner, driven by the shifting wind of human will, and sucked by the crawling tide of habit. To make Van go, Benjamin would sacrifice himself; the reluctance of the two men propelled

the two women irresistibly; and each heart was full of an entirely illogical bitterness toward every other.

But Fanny knew that the question was settled, and presently she arose and went to Benjamin's desk—against his solemn edict—and she wrote a conventionally joyous and grateful acceptance to Mrs. Jaynes's very kind invitation for Wednesday, the twenty-seventh, at eight o'clock.

As the two women walked upstairs together that night, Marian asked Mrs. Carpenny what she was going to wear to the dinner, "so our colors won't clash."

"Oh, any old thing. Millicent always looks exactly like a tenement clothes-line on a windy Monday; no use wasting anything on her," said Fanny crossly. "And if Ben won't take us there decently, I'm certainly not going to tag out a good gown by a month's steady travel in a trolley! Your brother certainly is the——"

"He certainly is!" assented Marian humbly, adding in a sudden gush, "But Billy Jaynes notices!" Fanny eyed the girl with curiosity, and the strain of the evening was evident in her reply:

"The rôle you've gone in for lately, Marian, is such a confession of your age that I'm surprised at your frank allusions to it. It is so generally reserved for *les vieilles filles*, you know; married men are their last ditch, so to speak. Good night."

"Good night, dear," cooed Marian, yawning frankly and then chastising her mouth with a gentle tapping of her frail fingers.

"We're all curdled by the thought of that dinner, aren't we, Fanny?"

Two doors slammed in the upper hall, and the house was filled with the silence of peace if not its spirit.

II

"A SHOCK OF PLEASURE"

"LIMPKIN! Limpkin! For heaven's sake, come here!" screamed Millicent Jaynes, still at the breakfast-

table, surrounded by a small *chevaux de frise* of devastated envelopes.

"Limpkin" rushed to the door and glared down at his wife over his glasses.

"Good Lord, Mil! I thought you'd upset the alcohol and were burning to a crisp!"

He was tall, stout, and his hair had that moth-eaten look that precedes baldness. In the days of their honeymoon they had gone to Germany, and "Limpkin" was what was left of Liebchen.

"What do you think has happened? All those stupid Carpennys, every last one of them, has accepted for the Wednesday dinner!"

"Did you ask them?"

"Why, yes, of course; how can you be so stupid?"

"Well then, what in thunder did you expect them to do?"

Millicent appealed dumbly to the ceiling, and then gazed at her husband with her big protruding eyes in which at times was advertised a degree of barefaced disillusion which "Limpkin" sometimes found very disconcerting. He often wished that her eyes were smaller or more deeply set.

"I supposed, of course, two of them, at least, would regret. Four in one family! I never dreamed of such a thing. They must be crazy. I never could bear any of them except poor Mrs. Carpenny—I'm sorry for her, but she bores me to death, just the same."

"Miss Carpenny isn't a bore, Mil, anyhow. Don't you think she's rather a clever little thing?"

"What I think of Marian Carpenny would neither interest you nor allow you to catch the eight fifty-one train," snapped his wife. And then Billy Jaynes flushed and looked hastily at his watch, and found it later than he supposed, and presently he banged out of the house and sprang into his waiting cart.

After a few moments of irritated silence Millicent made up her mind that, unless she expanded her dinner, that soft, sleek little cat of a Carpenny girl would inevitably sit on Billy's

left. The guilty flush on her husband's face, and the obstinate bang of the front door still sounding in her ears, made her determined to break up such a conjunction at any cost.

Millicent was one of those tall, formless, nervous, over-sympathetic creatures who age early; and after the unfortunate manner of plain women, she had hitherto remained fatuously in love with her husband, and fatiguingly faithful. In which soil jealousy flourishes as a banyan-tree.

After a moment's reflection she arose, and going to her desk, by one of the windows overlooking the river, she forthwith wrote and despatched two notes, one to Ross Romney, the general-utility man of his set. He was fifty, equipped with several well-preserved vices, one of which was a tongue possessed of a courage that almost equaled the daring of his eyes.

The other dinner invitation went to the Semple-Joneses—Mr. and Mrs. Semple-Jones had a reputation of such a nature that Mr. Semple-Jones had none at all for standing it.

"I'll put her on Billy's left, and then we'll see what's left of that little amateur Pompadour!" chuckled Millicent to herself. "And the Semple-Jones woman will be sure to come, as I've baited my hook with old Ross Romney. That affair has gone on so long that it's almost legal!"

Mrs. Jaynes prided herself on her good head in social matters, in which delusion Billy encouraged her for reasons which she only occasionally suspected.

III

"PLEASURE AT THE HELM"

WEDNESDAY evening, the twenty-seventh, came; and an hour and a half before eight o'clock the four Carpennys, sunk in sullen silence, filed down their front steps. The women were swollen into two enormous shapeless bundles of wraps, scarcely navigable even with the two men to steer them. Ben-

jamin had not relented one jot from his determination that if misery was to be the chosen game that night, it should be played out to the bitter end. Even happy-hearted Van was sunk in the general gloom. The four fairly friendly companions, as the world goes, hated one another individually and collectively on that expedition of pleasure, and discarded all disguise.

"Don't drag me along so, Ben. I can hardly breathe in this dress, as it is!" snapped his wife.

"All right, then; miss the next car and be twenty minutes late! I don't care a hang! The more I miss the better I'll like it!"

"You always do manage to take the pleasure out of everything," she grieved.

"Was there any in it?" Ben gave a hollow laugh, freer from mirth than many a sob.

"If Ben had my neck and arm, he'd have some excuse for growling," croaked Van in the rear with his sister, in what he considered a safe tone.

"And if Van would stop short of that fifth high-ball of his, perhaps his neck and arm would somewhat improve!" shouted Benjamin over his shoulder; and Van swore softly and nudged Marian, whereupon she teetered helplessly toward the gutter, and would have fallen if he had not clutched her in time and set her up again. Which incident led to strained relations between the two, and a muffled tirade from her.

"And if either of you men wore what Fanny and I do, or if you even knew what we are this minute carrying!"

"We're dying to!"

"How'd you feel in Louis Quatorze heels under wobbly arctics, tights over all—?"

"Softly, Marian, you may regret this!"

"Short skirts and long skirts, all as slippery as a string of wet eels! Wadded jackets that ride up, and gloves that ride down, and a fur-lined thing that weighs a ton and a half; and two veils over your head, one bent on pull-

ing your hair out by the roots, the other on shampooing what's left into a crow's nest! And yet through all this streaks of icy cold air strike us in spots here and there all over us—and then men wonder why women like to go to things in carriages!"

And then the trolley came and the women were ignominiously boosted up the steps, from whence they tottered, Chinese fashion, to their seats, where they sat dumb with indignation and discomfort, clutching their skirts under their long wraps with a fierce desperation known only to the sex that has always had a curious predilection for unnecessary martyrdom.

Only once did any of them speak—when they transferred from the first stifling car to the second one, freezing cold. Van suddenly gave way to a hysterical burst of hilarity, during which none of the others abated anything of their tragic misery, merely glancing at him with dull disgust.

"Three crows 'brooding on the empty eggs of thought!'" laughed Van, settling down opposite them in the otherwise deserted car; and as he studied them peace returned to him.

"There are people at this minute starving in this same slightly flattened world, my friends, that I'll bet look livelier than you do, going to a Lucullus——"

"He's never dined with Milly before," Benjamin dignified to explain.

"A Book of Coon Songs underneath the Bough, A Jug of Wine, a Dozen Buns, and Thou Beside me singing rag-time," sang Van; and the conductor knew he was in the presence of the smart set off its beaten track, and judged them tolerantly.

Patience, persistence and profanity landed them finally before the Jaynes's imposing Florentine iron gate. As they entered, an automobile flashed past them, and presently a door banged in the distance down the avenue; and at that moment Mrs. Carpenny's self-commiseration reached its climax.

When old Hodgins opened the door the two Carpenny women instantly dropped their skirts and opened their

cloaks, and with the marvelous histrionic art of their sex conveyed in an instant to the imported Jaynes butler the impression of having just descended from a closed carriage.

The men were shown to Billy Jaynes's den; the women swept upstairs. As they passed the drawing-room the host and hostess were to be seen alone before a blazing wood-fire. Their heads were near together, and Fanny Carpenny recognized at once that last rapid conjugal argument that seems inevitable prior to the descent upon them of convention from above.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me?" Mrs. Jaynes was demanding hysterically.

"You never told me you had asked that Semple-Jones menagerie! You told me the Carpenny gang and old Ross Romney. And here you've gone and asked people who haven't spoken to each other for—did I say four? Why, it's a good six years since the Carpenneys and the Semple-Joneses have met! Everybody on earth knows it but you, Mil!"

"Well, what shall I do? What shall I do? Think of something before they all get down! If they hadn't seen us we could have had smallpox or—or something. What shall I do?"

"Change the cards, anyhow, and step lively! Keep 'em apart, Mil, if some of us have to eat under the table," hissed Billy, after the retreating form of his distracted wife.

Millicent flew to the dining-room and shuffled and redealt the carefully placed name-cards, to the amazement and disgust of Hodgins, who stood by, watching, a solid block of expansive antagonism. Before she rushed back to the drawing-room she gave one hurried command:

"Hodgins, throw some more of that Senegambia stuff into all of those cocktails—a lot more!"

And then the old man soliloquized aloud, standing looking after her:

"An' she says, says she to me a 'arf-hour back, 'Hodgins,' says she, 'don't touch one of them cards no more'n if 'twas dymonite,' says shel" And then he did something to the cocktails, and

they were as strong as the Seven Sins, and calculated to comfortably blur all ethical questions for an hour or two.

Hodgins carried his small tray in his leisurely way to Mrs. Semple-Jones first. Her once beautiful face wore its usual evening mask of cosmetics, her always beautiful shoulders wore no mask at all. Her lovely intimate eyes still held the shock of meeting the Carpennys upstairs in the dressing-room, and sweeping by them totally blind and oblivious. She never had known or cared what it was all about; Carpenny had probably been abusive and her husband obstinate; and it was a great bore to keep up a quarrel with people in one's own set. But she was clever enough to realize that she must concede to her spouse all the small non-essentials of matrimony, that she might retain the freedom of a few fundamental privileges.

It was noticeable that all the women not only took, but finished, their ante-prandial libations that evening, feeling grateful for anything that would take the raw edge off the situation.

"A little powder on your hair and some rouge, and you'd make a charming Nattier!" murmured Ross Romney to Mrs. Carpenny, who sat next to him. Her "any old thing" turned out to be gray crêpe and Honiton lace and pearls.

Mrs. Semple-Jones overheard, because she was so accustomed to every inflection of his voice, and she began to hate the Carpennys on her own account.

Ross had bored her to death lately, but that was no reason for allowing another woman to annex him, at least under her very nose.

Mrs. Carpenny was aroused by the outrageous refusal of the enemy to lay aside the feud while under the Jaynes's roof, and she was tired, cold, hungry, and furious with her husband; so the strong cordial, the heated room, and Ross Romney's flattery combined to suddenly precipitate a gay flirtation between these two, who had known each other for years in an impersonal sort

of way. It lasted all through the evening, and rumor said much longer, unabated by the rage in Mrs. Semple-Jones's big eyes, which only served to stimulate Ross Romney; and the white lightning in Ben Carpenny's face, which, in like measure, stimulated his wife. That hideous trolley-ride should be paid for, minute for minute!

Standing on the hearth-rug were the host and Miss Carpenny. Billy had one elbow on the mantelpiece and was looking down at the girl and talking to her in a low, affectionate growl. Marian looked very young and virginal, dressed in white gauze with only a sprig of giant mignonette for ornament; which air of artlessness gave point to the slow, cool impertinences and innuendoes with which she was delighting Billy's rather jaded taste.

The hostess, in several shades of green, one of which matched her complexion, was thankful when Hodgins condescended to announce dinner. He had a rooted antipathy to speed. It was said of him that he made champagne pour like molasses.

The host whispered to Marian and actually seized a bit of her gown next to him and compelled her to go in with him. Reaching the table, after one rapid glance about, he coolly leaned over and exchanged two cards on his left, removing Mrs. Semple-Jones from the seat beside him to one beyond. Marian sank into the place of honor with an upward glance full of innocent surprise, tempered by a gentle habit of obedience.

And Billy whispered to her: "You ought to be on the stage!"

"And would my lord deign to adorn the bald-headed row?" she asked, drooping her head slowly.

His reply was lost in the bustle among the others and the slight confusion resulting from the hurried change of place. Millicent sat staring blankly at the tableau opposite—she must have blundered badly in her haste! But there was not even time to think.

"Are we observed?" murmured Billy, his eyes on his plate as he jabbed at an oyster.

"We are," laughed Marian.

"Don't tell on me!"

"As I share the booty, why should I?" asked she.

"Ah-h! What's the definition of booty, by the way? A man may as well know where he stands."

With the expression of an unusually proper child, she said softly:

"'Plunder taken in war';" and Billy shouted, and felt quite young again. On his right was Mrs. Carpenny, on hers Ross Romney, the four creating an isle of forbidden delight in the general sea of despair. To which, however, should be added young Van Carpenny, happily insulated by his sense of humor and general irresponsibility, combined with Hodgins's cocktail. Seated between Mrs. Semple-Jones, who refused to speak to him, and his brother, who refused even to look at him, Van had but one recourse: to keep Hodgins busy with his glass; and after the fourth course he talked to the table at large, and took a broad philosophical view of humanity, including himself.

The chances are that good-natured, ease-loving Mrs. Semple-Jones would have broken the ice and spoken to the Carpenneys if Fanny had not taken it into her head to flirt with her own particular cavalier, long licensed by society.

To attempt to hurry old Hodgins in his slow serving was to lose his honorable services, and so the meal dragged relentlessly on, and Millicent realized that she had evoked a malignant spirit in whose clutches she was absolutely helpless.

Presently Benjamin Carpenny was overheard muttering absent-mindedly to himself: "Slow as a walking funeral!" which inadvertence Van sought to cover by one of his several bursts of eloquence which he had from time to time addressed to the jonquils in the middle of the table: "Since the first butterfly flew through the sunshine carrying the first load of pollen on its fuzzy wings; since the first Italian officer whispered, '*Molta bella!*' on the Tornabuoni to the first woman who passed—not that he deemed it any

especial right or even privilege, but, as a man, obligatory upon him. He must live up to what that girl expects—else why was she there, *à pied?* Why——?"

At this point the host laughingly interposed, and then it was that poor shivering Millicent ended the dinner by rising and vowing to herself, as she led the way into the drawing-room, that she would never give another dinner, however long she might live, or however soon Hodgins gave notice!

Fortunately for her nerves, two other men from the next place who had been asked in for cards after dinner were already lounging about the fire, and some of the burden fell from her weary shoulders.

Billy Jaynes in the dining-room at that moment began for the first time to feel the strain of the situation, but managed to outwit Hodgins and passed only cigarettes to the men, muttering something about "cards" and "the ladies."

Van still wandered along the narrow border of gentlemanly mellowness. Benjamin continued silently to outline what he'd say to his wife before he slept that night. Mr. Semple-Jones talked State politics to his host in an obstinate monotone, entirely ignoring the presence of the Carpenneys, who, however, were beyond caring, one full of his wine, the other full of his grievance.

Gathered once more together in the other room the whole party clung pathetically to the two masculine new-comers, somewhat to their amazement and elation of spirit.

"Arrange the card-tables, Limpkin; I'm a nervous wreck! I never passed such a night in my life!" whispered Mrs. Jaynes to her husband. Whereupon Billy promptly installed the demure person in white as his partner, but Millicent also was beyond all momentary caring.

Mrs. Semple-Jones lost so heavily that no one was surprised to see her make the first move to go, except her husband, who happened to be playing in luck. But his deterrent glare in her

direction reached her too late; she was already holding Millicent's stone-cold hand and murmuring her thanks for "such a perfectly charming evening!"

IV

"REVOLVES THE SAD VICISSITUDES OF THINGS"

NOTHING but the constant necessity of propitiating her husband made Mrs. Semple-Jones civil on the way home, suggesting that perhaps the complaisant husband has a degraded sort of wisdom after all.

Mrs. Carpenny had arisen and stood waiting for the slam of the front door which announced the departure of the enemy. Then she and Marian ran merrily upstairs together, suddenly affiliated by the comradeship of crime.

"How did you dare, Fanny?" laughed Marian.

"How did you?" giggled Mrs. Carpenny. Whatever Hodgins had put into those cocktails, it had served to soften the harsh outline of several of the commandments, and the two young women openly gloried in their naughtiness. As the maid began to button Marian's arctics the latter said mischievously:

"I'm a little surprised at your open attack on the 'sere and yellow' one, as most married women don't go in for that sort of thing until they're almost forty."

"*En revanche!*" laughed Fanny.

Presently as they descended the stairs Marian whispered to her sister-in-law:

"Fanny, I may as well tell you now, I'm not going home in the trolley."

"Neither am I!" chuckled Fanny, and the two stood and laughed till they cried.

In the great hall below they found all the men gathered, their overcoats on, their hats under their arms, their gloves in process of being put on.

"I've got my car out, Carpenny, and your wife has promised me that I shall have the pleasure of giving your

party a lift home. So sorry about that accident to yours. Come on, now. Don't say one word, old fellow; it's all arranged."

It was Ross Romney who spoke, muffled in fur from top to toe, and dangling a fairly devilish-looking pair of goggles from his little finger.

"Thanks, Romney, I'm sure. But we'll return as we came," said Carpenny in a low, excited voice.

"Oh, but I've already accepted!" cried his wife airily; whereupon Van snapped his fingers and executed a *pas seul*.

"Too late for objections, Carpenny. All arranged. Come along, Mrs. Carpenny; this way, please. Come on, both you fellows!" Touching the fair Fanny's plump elbow with two fingers, Romney piloted her to the front door.

"I shall go as I came," repeated Benjamin, white with wrath, but too astonished at his wife to remain master of the situation.

"Come, Miss Carpenny!" cried Ross Romney for reply. Then Billy Jaynes spoke:

"Oh, I say, Romney, play fair! Leave one of the royal family to me. I'm going to drive Miss Carpenny and her little brother Van home. Understood from the first."

Billy's wife shivered. It was the beginning of another of Billy's serious flirtations. She knew all the signs. She suffered so—each time! Suddenly she had an inspiration.

"Will you stay a moment after they all get off?" she said aside to Benjamin Carpenny. And he, also snatching at passing straws, stayed, with a sudden warmth about his heart.

"Well, the form of greatness thrust upon one comes next to being born great!" chirped Van, following his sister and Billy Jaynes.

He sat behind the other two, occupying the undivided rear seat too loosely for any comfort under Billy's well-known crazy driving. He caromed wildly against the cushions, which were too smooth for adhesion of any sort, as helpless as a beanbag. Along the

jet-black country road they tore, Billy bent on showing off before the Carpenny girl and breaking down, if he could, her impish pose of imperturbability.

But fast as they went, there came a puff and a roar and a huge black monster passed them.

"Damnation, that's Romney!" muttered Billy, and his hand left the throttle, and it suddenly became man against man—women, and everything else, to the winds!

Van sought solace for a bitten tongue in melody, and began shouting an improvisation at the top of his lungs:

"Tooling on to hell-o
In a car of yellow,
With another fellow,
I say, Fan, there's Ben ahead of you!

"Really, it's not proper!
Sure to come a cropper!
But how can I stop her?
I say, Fan, there's Ben ahead of you!

"I decline to blame her,
I refuse to shame her,
Don't even like to name her—
I say, Ben, you're——"

"Can't you stop him?" gasped Marian breathlessly as they saw the city's lights ahead.

"Can't stop anything tonight; all the brakes in the world are out of order!" cried Billy gaily, having passed Romney a quarter of a mile back, and thereby securing those ten unchaperoned minutes at the Carpenny house before the others arrived, which he had been counting upon. However, if Van had three sheets in the wind, he still kept a steady hand on the tiller.

And out at the Jaynes's place Hodgins potted about in his pantry till long after midnight, refusing all assistance loftily, for along that road disappeared the perquisites of dinner-giving.

Millicent and Mr. Carpenny sat in low chairs before the hall fire, and discovered in less than ten minutes that a strong affinity existed between them, hitherto undreamed of.

When she put her hand out impulsively and warned him about the impending *amourette* between her im-

pressionable husband and his young sister, he found that the unhappy woman had not only a pretty hand, but an unusually soft one, and he told her so. And somehow their griefs seemed instantly to be on the right road to amelioration.

They spoke quite frankly of the events of the evening and Millicent shed a few tears. This quiet man's sympathy seemed so exactly the one thing she needed in her life.

Seated, half-turned away in the ruddy firelight, the electric lights turned off, only a distant lamp standing sentinel over the proprieties, Millicent looked as she used to do when Billy fell in love with her; and the teasing shackles of matrimony fell away from Benjamin, and he felt quite gay and boyish, and he, too, had an inspiration.

"We are like two non-smokers in a room full of smokers, Mrs. Jaynes. There is but one recourse for us."

"You don't mean—?" began she, bewildered, but conscious of a distinct thrill.

"Yes, I mean exactly that!" Then they both began to laugh excitedly.

"It would utterly spoil my argument with Billy," she objected, still smiling.

"Let's both come down out of our pulpits and join the congested congregation of sinners. Let's give the thing a try, you and I! Pool our griefs, as it were. They all do it, you know. And, do you know, I feel lots happier already!"

"Billy says that neither all our love nor all our eggs should be put into one basket," murmured she absent-mindedly.

"There you are! Your husband to back us!" laughed the intrepid Ben, dragging his chair a bit nearer, whereupon Millicent checked him with that modern grieved look that has done away with the necessity of carrying stilettos. There was a short silence.

"Well, I'm waiting. Will you join me in the smoke?"

"What on earth do you mean?" She eyed him, startled.

"We were speaking of a roomful of smokers and the advisability of——"

"Oh, yes, I remember! But we've been in the pulpit since, you know," she laughed.

"Well?" he queried, his heart beating a stroke or two more rapidly than it had for many a year, except from an attack of temper.

She arose and put out her hand to him.

"Cinnamon cigarettes?" she laughed.

"Oh, of course, to begin with! Good night. I'll see you at the Wallings' tomorrow night?"

She nodded, the diablerie in her

flexible face making her look ten years younger.

"The dinner went off very nicely, Hodgins. Good night," she said cheerfully as the man returned from closing the door after Carpenny.

"A bit 'urried, m'm, but through no fault of me own. Good night, m'm."

The breath of scandal developed into an exhilarating gale toward Spring when what became known as The Carpenny Crisis slowly disclosed itself in all of its triangular symmetry.



THE GIFT

By Archibald Sullivan

DEAR Heart, I would that you were dead
Within the chapel of the night,
And all the lily stars were laid
About you in a wreath of white.

I would your jewel eyes were locked
Safe in the casket of repose;
I would your mouth were robbed of red
And silent as the sleeping rose.

The nightingales would weave their grief
Into a silver shroud for you;
The moon would deck your hands and arms
With rings and bracelets of the dew.

Then, ere the dawn came from the hills
Clad in her livery of years,
I'd place my gift above your heart,
A little crucifix—of tears.



WAS THIS PHILADELPHIA?

TRAMP—Please, sir, I'm a stranger here. . . .
NATIVE—Well, you've got a good deal to be thankful for.

EMPHASIS IN THE DRAMA

By Clayton Hamilton

THE importance of the principle of emphasis is recognized in all the arts. Every product of the making mind contains some features that may be described, in Mulvaney's phrase, as "superfluous necessities." These features must be gathered and grouped in the background, while the artist throws into vivid relief those elements of his work that embody the essence of the thing he has to say. The halo with which the Byzantine mosaists surrounded the faces of their saints, the glory of golden light that gleams about the figure of Christ in heaven in Tintoretto's paintings, the blank bright walls of the Doge's palace undermined by darkling and shadowy arcades, the refrain of a Provençal song, the sharp shadow under the visor of Verrocchio's equestrian statue, the thought-provoking chiaroscuro of Rembrandt's figure paintings—these features are all designed to attract attention to the essential elements of a whole of many parts. Emphasis must be given to the central truth of a work of art in order that the beholder may not look instead at the mere accidents of its expression. Where many elements are gathered together in the name of one idea, some of them must be more important than the others because they are in closer communion with it; and the principle of emphasis demands that the artist should indicate clearly which elements are essential and which are merely subsidiary.

No other work of art, except perhaps a Gothic cathedral, is made of elements so multifarious as those of an acted play. The details of a drama

are so many and so varied that a playwright may never hope to succeed without a nice understanding and a careful application of the principle of emphasis. This principle, as applied to the drama, assumes many different phases; and it may perhaps be interesting to examine some of the methods which dramatists employ to make their points effectively and bring out the salient features of their plays.

It is obviously easy to emphasize by position. The last moments in any act are of necessity emphatic because they are the last. During the intermission the minds of the spectators will naturally dwell upon the scene that has been presented to them most recently. If they think back toward the beginning of the act, they must first think through the concluding dialogue. This lends to curtain-falls a special importance of which our modern dramatists never fail to take advantage.

It is interesting to remember that this simple form of emphasis by position was impossible in the Elizabethan theatre and was quite unknown to Shakespeare. His plays were produced on a platform without a curtain; his actors had to exit at the end of every scene; and usually his plays were acted from beginning to end without any intermission. It was therefore impossible for him to bring his acts to an emphatic close by a clever curtain-fall. We have gained this advantage only in recent times because of the improved physical conditions of our theatre.

A few years ago it was customary for dramatists to end every act with a bang that would reverberate in the

ears of the audience throughout the entr'acte. Recently our playwrights have shown a tendency toward more quiet curtain-falls; the exquisite close of the first act of "The Admirable Crichton" was merely dreamfully suggestive of the past and future of the action; and the second act ended pictorially, without a word. But whether a curtain-fall gains its effect actively or passively, it should, if possible, sum up the entire dramatic accomplishment of the act that it concludes and foreshadow the subsequent progress of the play.

Likewise, the first moments in an act are of necessity emphatic because they are the first. After an intermission the audience is prepared to watch with renewed eagerness the resumption of the action. The close of the third act of "Beau Brummel" makes the audience long expectantly for the opening of the fourth; and whatever the dramatist may do after the raising of the curtain will be emphasized because he does it first. An exception must be made of the opening act of a play. A dramatist seldom does anything of importance during the first ten minutes of his piece, because the action is likely to be interrupted by late-comers in the audience and other distractions incident to the early hour. But after an intermission he is surer of attention, and may thrust important matter into the openings of his acts.

The last position, however, is more potent than the first. It is because of their finality that exit-speeches are emphatic. It has become customary in the theatre to applaud a prominent actor every time he leaves the stage; and this custom has made it necessary for the dramatist to precede an exit with some speech or action important enough to justify the interruption. Though Shakespeare and his contemporaries knew nothing of the curtain-fall, they at least understood fully the emphasis of exit speeches. They even tagged them with rhyme to give them greater prominence. An actor likes to take advantage of his last chance to move an audience. When he leaves

the stage he wants at least to be remembered.

In general it may be said that any pause in the action emphasizes by position the speech or business that immediately preceded it. This is true not only of the long pause at the end of an act: the point is illustrated just as well by an interruption of the play in mid-career, like Mrs. Fiske's ominous and oppressive minute of silence in the last act of "Hedda Gabler." The employment of pause as an aid to emphasis is of special importance in the reading of lines.

It is also customary in the drama to emphasize by proportion. More time is given to significant scenes than to dialogues of subsidiary interest. The strongest characters in a play are given most to say and do; and the extent of the lines of the others is proportioned to their importance in the action. Hamlet says more and does more than any other character in the tragedy in which he figures. This is as it should be; but, on the other hand, Polonius, in the same play, seems to receive greater emphasis by proportion than he really deserves. The part is very fully written. Polonius is often on the stage, and talks incessantly whenever he is present; but, after all, he is a man of small importance and fulfils a minor purpose in the plot. He is, therefore, falsely emphasized. That is why the part of Polonius is what French actors call a *faux bon rôle*—a part that seems better than it is. There are many *faux bon rôles* in the contemporary theatre. The first scene of "Ivan the Terrible" presents a full gathering of them. They sit around and talk Russian history, while the audience waits and waits for something to be done. But the dramatist respects the gray hairs of his tedious councilors, and lets them have their say.

Another obvious means of emphasis in the drama is the use of antithesis—an expedient employed in every art. The purpose of a play is not so much to expound characters as it is to contrast them. People of varied views and opposing aims come nobly to the grapple

in a struggle that vitally concerns them; and the tensivity of the struggle will be augmented if the difference between the characters is marked. The comedies of Ben Jonson, which held the stage for two centuries after their author's death, owed their success largely to the fact that they presented a constant contrast of mutually foiling personalities. In "The School for Scandal" Charles and Joseph Surface are much more effective together than either of them would be alone. The whole-hearted and happy-go-lucky recklessness of the one sets off the smooth and smug dissimulation of the other; the first gives light to the play, and the second shade. Just as a tall man looks taller when he is walking with a person undersized, so Othello seems more awfully unreasoning in the presence of the intellectual Iago. Hamlet's wit is sharpened by the garrulous obtuseness of Polonius; the sad world-wisdom of Paula Tanqueray is accentuated by the innocence of Ellean.

But the expedient of antithesis is most effectively employed in the balance of scene against scene. What is known as "comic relief" is introduced in various plays, not so much, as the phrase would suggest, to rest the sensibilities of the audience as to emphasize the solemn scenes that come before and after it. It is for this purpose that Shakespeare in "Macbeth" introduces a low-comic soliloquy into the midst of a murder scene. Hamlet's ranting over the grave of Ophelia is made more emphatic by antithesis with the foolish banter that precedes it. This contrast of mood between scene and scene was unknown in ancient plays and in the imitations of them that flourished in the first great period of the French tragic stage.

Although the ancient drama frequently violated the three unities of action, time and place, it always preserved a fourth unity, which we may call unity of mood. It remained for the Spaniards and the Elizabethan English to grasp the dramatic value of the great antithesis between the frivolous and the serious, the grotesque and

the sublime, and to pass it on through Victor Hugo to the contemporary theatre.

Sometimes a great effect is gained by presenting an antithesis of mood within the compass of a single scene. Dame Quickly's account of Falstaff's death touches at once the heights of humor and the depths of pathos. We laugh and laugh, but we laugh through tears of sadness. In his great dialogue with Tubal, Shylock is at the same moment plunged in melancholy over the defection of his daughter and flushed with triumph over the fact that he has Antonio at last within his clutches. Each emotion becomes more potent because it is contrasted with the other.

A further means of emphasis is, of course, the use of climax. This principle is at the basis of the familiar method of working up an entrance. My lady's coach is heard clattering behind the scenes. A servant rushes to the window and tells us that his mistress is alighting. There is a ring at the entrance; we hear the sound of footsteps in the hall. At last the door is thrown open, and my lady enters, greeted by a salvo of applause.

A first entrance unannounced is rarely seen upon the modern stage. Shakespeare's "King John" opens very simply. The stage direction reads, "Enter King John, Queen Elinor, Pembroke, Essex, Salisbury and others, with Chatillon"; and then the king speaks the opening line of the play. Yet when Mr. Beerbohm Tree revived this drama at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1899 he devised an elaborate opening to give a climactic effect to the entrance of the king. The curtain rose upon a vaulted room of state, impressive in its bare magnificence. A throne was set upon a dais to the left, and several noblemen in splendid costumes were lingering about the room. At the back was a Norman corridor approached by a flight of lofty steps which led upward from the level of the stage. There was a peal of trumpets from without, and soon to a stately music the royal guards marched upon the scene. They were

followed by ladies with gorgeous dresses sweeping away in long trains borne by pretty pages, and great lords walking with dignity to the music of the regal measure. At last Mr. Tree appeared and stood for a moment at the top of the steps, every inch a king. Then he strode majestically to the dais, ascended to the throne, and turning about with measured majesty spoke the first line of the play, some minutes after the raising of the curtain.

But not only in the details of a drama is the use of climax necessary. The whole action should sweep upward in intensity until the highest point is reached. In the Shakespearean drama the highest point came somewhat early in the piece, usually in the third act of the five that Shakespeare wrote; but in contemporary plays the climax is almost always placed at the end of the penultimate act—the fourth act if there are five, and the third act if there are four. Nowadays the four-act form with a strong climax at the end of the third act seems to be most often used. This is the form, for instance, of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler," of Mr. Jones's "Mrs. Dane's Defense" and of Mr. Pinero's "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" and "The Gay Lord Quex." Each begins with an act of exposition, followed by an act of rising interest. Then the whole action of the play rushes upward toward the curtain-fall of the third act, after which an act is used to bring the play to a dreadful or a happy conclusion.

A less familiar means of emphasis is that which owes its origin to surprise. This expedient must be used with great delicacy, because a sudden and startling shock of surprise is likely to scatter the attention of the spectators and flurry them out of a true conception of the scene. But if a moment of surprise has been carefully led up to by anticipatory suggestion, it may be used to throw into sharp and sudden relief an important point in the play. No one knows that Cyrano de Bergerac is on the stage until he rises in the midst of the crowd in the Hôtel de

Bourgogne and shakes his cane at Montfleury. When Mr. Tree played D'Artagnan in "The Musketeers" he emerged suddenly in the midst of a scene from a suit of old armor standing monumental at the back of the stage—a *deus ex machinâ* to dominate the situation. New York playgoers will remember the disguise of Sherlock Holmes in the last act of Mr. Gillette's admirable melodrama. The appearance of the ghost in the closet scene of "Hamlet" is made emphatic by its unexpectedness.

But perhaps the most effective form of emphasis in the drama is emphasis by suspense. Wilkie Collins, who with all his faults as a critic of life remains the most skilful maker of plots in English fiction, used to say that the secret of holding the attention of one's readers lay in the ability to do three things: "Make 'em laugh; make 'em weep; make 'em wait." These three abide, and the greatest is the last. There is no use in making an audience wait, however, unless you first give them an inkling of what they are waiting for. An audience must be tantalized; it must see and long for the fruit that is just beyond its grasp. The dramatist plays with his spectators as we play with a kitten when we trail a ball of yarn before its eyes, only to snatch it away just as the kitten leaps for it.

This method of emphasizing by suspense gives force to what are known technically as the *scènes à faire* of a drama. A *scène à faire*—the phrase was devised by Francisque Sarcey—is a scene late in a play that is demanded absolutely by the previous progress of the plot. The audience knows that the scene must come sooner or later, and if the element of suspense be ably managed, is made to long for it some time before it comes. In "Hamlet," for instance, the killing of the king by the hero is of course a *scène à faire*. The audience knows before the first act is over that such a scene is surely coming. When the king is caught praying in his closet and Hamlet stands over him with naked sword,

the spectators think at last that the *scène à faire* has arrived; but Shakespeare "makes 'em wait" for two acts more, until the very ending of the play.

In comedy the commonest *scènes à faire* are love scenes that the audience anticipates and longs to see. Perhaps the young folks are frequently on the stage, but the desired scene is prevented by the presence of other characters. Only after many movements are the lovers left alone; and when at last the pretty moment comes the audience sits up and thrills with long-awaited enjoyment.

It is always dangerous for a dramatist to omit a *scène à faire*—to raise in the minds of his audience an expectation that is never realized. Sheridan did this in "The School for Scandal" when he failed to introduce a love scene between Charles and Maria, and Mr. Jones did it in "Whitewashing Julia" when he made the audience expect throughout the play a revelation of the truth about the puff-box and then left them disappointed in the end. But these cases are exceptional. In general it may be said that an unsatisfied suspense is no suspense at all.

One of the most effective instances of suspense in the modern drama is offered in the opening of "John Gabriel Borkman," one of Ibsen's later plays. Many years before the drama opens the hero has been sent to jail for misusing the funds of a bank of which he was director. After five years of imprisonment he was released, eight years before the opening of the play. During this eight years he has lived alone in the great gallery of his house, never going forth even in the dark of night, and seeing only two people who come to call upon him. One of these, a young girl, sometimes plays for him on the piano while he paces moodily up and down the gallery. These facts are expounded to the audience in a dialogue between Mrs. Borkman and her sister that takes place in a lower room below Borkman's quarters; and all the while, in the pauses of the conversation, the

hero is heard walking overhead, pacing incessantly up and down. As the act advances, the audience expects at any moment that the hero will appear. The front door is thrown open; two minor characters enter; and still Borkman is heard walking up and down. There is more talk about him on the stage; the act is far advanced, and soon it seems that he must show himself. From the upper room is heard the music of the Dance of Death that his young girl friend is playing for him. Now to the dismal measures of the dance the dialogue on the stage swells to a climax. Borkman is still heard pacing in the gallery. And the curtain falls. Ten minutes later the raising of the curtain discloses John Gabriel Borkman standing with his hands behind his back looking at the girl who has been playing for him. The moment is trebly emphatic—by position, at the opening of an act, by surprise, and most of all by suspense. When the hero is at last discovered the audience looks at him.

Of course there are many minor means of emphasis in the theatre, but most of these are artificial and mechanical. The proverbial limelight is one of the most effective. The intensity of the dream scene in Sir Henry Irving's performance of "The Bells" was due largely to the way in which the single figure of Mathias was silhouetted by a ray of light against a shadowy and inscrutable background ominous with voices. Before electric lights were introduced into our theatres it was necessary for actors to take the centre of the stage in order to perform important pieces of business within the focus of the footlights. This, of course, is no longer necessary; because we are now able at will to illuminate or darken any corner of the stage. But with our new liberty has come a new dependence, and we must now look to the stage-electrician to give our dramas light and shade.

In this materialistic age actors even resort to blandishments of costume to give their parts a special emphasis. Our leading ladies are more

richly clad than the minor members of their companies. Even Mr. Mansfield, our foremost actor, resorted in his performance of Brutus to the indefensible expedient of changing his costume act by act and dressing always in exquisite and subtle colors, while the other Romans, Cassius included, wore the same togas of unaffected white throughout the play. This was a fault in emphasis.

In every play that is properly pro-

portioned all of the methods of emphasis enumerated will be found to be consistently employed. Its essential features will be made prominent by position, by proportion, by antithesis, by climax, by surprise, by suspense, by mechanical artifice, or by a combination of any or all of these. The necessity of emphasis is ever present; the means of emphasis are simple; and any dramatist who knows his art will employ them, whether consciously or not.



WHY?

By Elsa Barker

YOU ask me why my love so fondly clings
 Around your heart of love. Is it because
 Some deeds of yours have won the world's applause?
 Is it that your inspired imaginings
 Have stirred to wilder flight my lyric wings?
 Or is it maybe that your passion draws
 My own desire by Love's mysterious laws?
 Nay, dear, not any of these lovely things.

Why do I love you, then? Because of this:
 My soul discovered when our love was new
 That a high guest in your soul's chamber lies;
 And sometimes in the rapture of our kiss,
 That angel sleeper—the immortal You—
 A moment wakes and looks me in the eyes.



THE NEXT THING COMING

MRS. HIGBLOWER (*in her auto*)—Be careful, dear, and don't run over anyone.

HIGBLOWER—Why are you so nervous?

"Well, you know you haven't taken out any insurance yet against killing people."

ESTELLE

By Ellen Duvall

COUNT ZOFFSKY and his friend D'Auvillières quitted the afternoon reception late, and walked away together. Washington is at its best in the golden-green twilight of April, and as they reached the Square both involuntarily paused and looked about for a seat. It had showered in the afternoon, and the air, somewhat warm and languid, was full of the odor of hyacinths mingled with those fainter, rarer tree-scents which Spring evokes. They sat down near a huge flowering Chinese magnolia guarded by a spruce.

"It recalls Paris," said D'Auvillières, with a long, satisfied sigh. The evening star, lone warder of the sky and of the reluctant air, hung low in the west, and beneath it still lingered a hint of greenish amber filmed with rose; while the soothing quietude, emphasized not marred by distant echoing footsteps, was like an earnest of rest.

Denizens of the world, at home in every capital of Europe, Zoffsky and D'Auvillières could only be called foreign because of the fulness of life which both so admirably suggested. The two friends spoke French, of course, that language which lends itself so well to allusion and which enfolds with meaning as with an atmosphere. D'Auvillières was a short, dark, phlegmatic Frenchman, gestureless, apparently motionless, but with a glance and an inflection of voice that could signify anything.

"It's composite, a marvelous composite; every time I return I am more and more impressed by the spectacle. But a type will eventually emerge; I wonder what it will be like. The

American nation—not yet a people—to be unified by an ideal—if they can hold to it, and live up to it. Well—" D'Auvillières broke off, and lighted a cigar. "I am sorry not to have seen your fiancée. When are you to be married?" He spoke in a deliberate, colorless way.

"Early in June, but the date is not yet set," said Zoffsky. Then after a pause, "Am I wise?"

D'Auvillières regarded him thoughtfully. "Prudent, at all events. Marriage is a necessity. Nature and social law decree that a man cannot have everything. And they get most out of life, perhaps, who accept necessity gracefully and make the best of it. Doubtless, on the domestic side of life your success will be as marked as on every other. You ought to marry, *mon brave*. Beauty is nature's only essential right, and good looks such as yours should not be wasted. May your daughters inherit your beauty with the added charm of femininity."

Zoffsky smiled good-humoredly. "Won't you let me have something for myself, Henri? Your view of matrimony has always seemed rather flat and meager."

"I said *necessity*. A wise man accepts necessity, and—reduces it to a minimum. You are young at heart, kindly, amenable to the emotions; therefore—marry."

"But may I not be a little in love? Ought not the pill to be gilded?"

"Certainly, as little or as much as you please. It is the emotions, in reason, that give taste to life. Why eat a peach if you cannot discriminate between it and a mudball? But do not

over-season life's banquet. If, to the necessity of marriage, one can add the free grace of affection, one does well. You care, then, for the lady? I shall be glad to hear that you do. There is nothing I admire more than the emotions; they keep one young, elastic, resilient." His glance was interested.

Zoffsky sighed and smiled. "Oh, I am thirty-six; one's heart takes on a complexity, life is woven of more and more threads, and the pattern becomes more and more difficult to follow. If Madame Barry was not young, beautiful, rich, independent—well, if everything was not unexceptionable—" His shrug and smile were sufficient.

"A redistribution of *ifs* would upset the order of the universe," returned D'Auvillières; then, after a short silence in which he quietly scrutinized his friend, he said, "If your feeling accords with nature rather than with the novelists, you are probably safe and sane."

"I don't follow," said Zoffsky, laughing.

D'Auvillières changed his position. "The novelists over-emphasize the emotions, so that a young man, having filled his mind and fancy with emotional literature—oh, I did it once!—is quite unable to distinguish between his own proper feelings and those factitious ones superinduced by the novels. He imagines himself, emotionally, all the heroes he has ever mooned over. But one pays, one pays."

"What of Balzac?" asked Zoffsky carelessly.

"A doubtful guide," returned D'Auvillières coolly. "Fancy Balzac and Sainte-Beuve being of the same race! Both were geniuses; but only one was a gentleman. I hope you don't take even Balzac too seriously, Boris."

Zoffsky leaned toward the magnolia, and inhaled the wandering breeze. "You think then that the novelists, by extolling one passion at the expense of all the others, have done as much harm as good?"

"Precisely; they have wrested the truth, and have given a twist to civilized man's emotional thinking which

it takes all the years after thirty to correct."

Zoffsky was silent for a moment, then ventured, "It seems to me that the emotions fill a large part of life, Henri. I may not philosophize as you do, my feelings certainly do not crystallize so rapidly into thought. But those feelings you rather underestimate lie at the base of too much not to command attention. For instance, I wished to speak to you tonight of—Estelle." His voice softened on the name, and he turned his face fully toward D'Auvillières.

"Ah, yes; how old is she now?"

"In her tenth year."

D'Auvillières was silent.

"I should like to keep her," pursued Zoffsky, hesitating; "I mean I should like her to be brought up in my family, under my eye."

"She is agreeable to you then?"

"She is charming!" cried Zoffsky with enthusiasm.

D'Auvillières nodded a guarded approval. "There nature speaks—the father. Such matters are sometimes awkward, but they can generally be arranged. You are uncertain of Madame Barry?"

"I suppose so," said Zoffsky.

"And why?" demanded D'Auvillières, with a shade of acrimony. "Simply because of the extravagant fiction you have cloyed your mind with, because of a certain supposed racial attitude towards certain phases of human life. The Anglo-Saxons understand things without saying; while we both say and understand—is that it?"

"Perhaps."

"You are in a quandary? You don't know how Madame Barry would accept the fact of Estelle *after* your marriage, nor how she would accept the voicing of such a fact *before*?"

"Precisely. What shall I do—wait, or speak now? I wish to be just to Madame Barry; I wish to be kind to little Estelle; I wish to make no unpleasantness for myself. That ought to be clear enough, even to please you."

"I do not know madame," said

D'Auvillières thoughtfully; then quickly, seeing Zoffsky hesitate, "if you love her, don't attempt to describe her—women beloved are all alike. But if you can give me any idea of her disposition——"

"We are good comrades," said the young man. "She has traveled——"

"That's nothing," said D'Auvillières, filling up the other's pause. "The stupidest people I have known have been all round the world, and have seen everything. To know one human being, even superficially, goes farther towards a liberal education. Does she idealize you?"

"I think not," said Zoffsky candidly. "Oh, of course, if I were not Count Boris Zoffsky, promising, distinguished, fairly well off, no glaring vices—As I said, everything is most suitable."

"There is no woman living who does not ask the impossible from life—that is, from the man she loves, or who she thinks ought to love her."

"Henri, don't wreak your vertiginous paradoxes on me; my Russian brain won't carry them."

"You mean your Russian heart," said D'Auvillières gently, and his smile was charming. "Well, is your heart very much set upon this marriage?"

"My mind is, at all events."

"In asking, or in giving advice one betrays the boundaries and extent of one's emotional experience. How do you really stand towards Madame Barry?"

Zoffsky reflected. "We are friends," he said at last, with confidence.

D'Auvillières regarded him with ironic pity. "Then tell her. It will be a test of her capacity for friendship, something rarer than love, beauty, genius, in the creature feminine. Moreover," and his voice changed, "if you really wish to keep the little girl, it is best that your fiancée should know beforehand; otherwise she might object. And," he added, with a certain nobleness of expression, "if there is anything which might cause Madame Barry to pause, or to draw back, it is only fair that she should know. We

all win women under false pretense, but—there is a limit to allowable pretense."

The friends parted at the corner, and, because of the charm of the approaching night, Zoffsky made a detour and passed slowly on to his betrothed's. He could afford to be leisurely. The lady was won, or rather, their mutual understanding of benefits and combined suitability was perfect, so that there was no cause for a ripple of anxiety any more than for a thrill of joy. He half-smiled, half-sighed. As D'Auvillières had once said: Certainty is a foe to zest. But he was still young at heart, the future was still a golden haze, colorful, if indistinct. He had ambition rather than ambitions, yet he meant to rise high, to leave an impress, to set Russia forward in the march of the nations. Marcia Barry could and would strengthen his career, and he could open to her doors that did not exist at home.

The uptown streets were comparatively empty, and as he passed along and the delicate tree-shadows cast by the electric lights quivered over him he felt an agreeable sense of possession, as if he had laid hold upon space, upon the power and tranquillity of the night. When he stood at last in Mrs. Barry's small inner drawing-room a glow of satisfaction, the warmest feeling he had for the lady, came over him. Yes, he was sincerely proud of his fiancée. He knew that she could "hold her own"—was not that the blunt American phrase?—or rather *his* own, which was more to the purpose anywhere. About her and her belongings there was no declamatory, oppressive opulence of the newly rich. For herself and her surroundings she had achieved completeness with simplicity.

Mrs. Barry came in presently, unhurried, and gave him her soft hand. She had a height and carriage which agreeably matched his, though now, as they faced each other, and he raised that soft, cool, firm hand to his lips, she appeared somewhat small; but Zoffsky was an unusually tall man. As he looked into her fine clear eyes,

he was reminded of that sky, for these eyes, too, were of a greenish amber, and above them arose the sweep of pale bronze hair.

"You were not at the Ambassador's this afternoon—I missed you," he said gently.

"I was prevented at the last moment. My sister-in-law, an impulsive young person, sent her two children here with their nurse, a new one, while she hurried on to New York to meet her husband's ship. The children are great mother-babies, and insisted on clinging to me for want of better; and I have not long since disposed of them—in bed."

She had a beautiful voice, and spoke with a full, round articulation. Her reply relieved and encouraged him. How opportune and unexpected an opening! What luck, he would have said, and how needless to have racked his brain in seeking to devise a proper, and seemingly fortuitous, approach to the subject of Estelle.

"You like children, then?" he asked quickly, and there was something in his voice she had never heard before.

"Oh, no more than reason," she returned lightly. Then, noting his change of expression, she added less carelessly, "I suppose I like children as well as do the generality of women. But what it would be if I had the real care and responsibility of them I don't know."

"Balzac says it is easier to be a good wife than a good mother," said Zoffsky, hesitating, yet serious.

"Naturally; for a woman stands as Providence to her child, but she takes her husband, perforce, as she finds him—as some other woman—his mother, perhaps—has made him."

The opening was not so easy after all.

"D'Auvillières says that women expect the impossible from life."

She laughed. "But what is the impossible to one is the mere commonplace to another. By-the-bye, I'm sorry to have missed your friend D'Auvillières."

"Oh, you might not like him—women seldom do—he won't let them."

Zoffsky spoke hastily, as if he wished to get his friend out of the way.

"Then somewhere, at some time, he has been hurt," said Mrs. Barry gently.

"Yes," said Zoffsky gravely, "he has been hurt. He was obliged to sacrifice the woman who loved him to a point of honor."

Mrs. Barry lifted her dark brows.

"But, according to a Frenchman, does a woman ever mind being sacrificed except to another woman?"

Zoffsky looked rather at a loss. He made no reply, but regarded his fiancée speculatively. She smiled at his questioning regard. "What is it? You evidently have something on your mind."

Zoffsky made no immediate answer. He pulled at his thick, blond mustache, and bent forward his small, solid-looking head, the closer to scrutinize his lady. "Marcia, don't you think we are very much alike?"

"Very; my brother says we evidently pull just about the same stroke." It was true. In their leisurely, drifting life, their reach of feeling and of thought was apparently the same.

"That is what attracted me from the first; our *entente cordiale*, our good understanding. But, Marcia, we really know very little of each other. D'Auvillières says that the reason why matrimonial courage exceeds all others is that it takes so much for granted."

"And takes for granted always the pleasant things," said Mrs. Barry quietly, with a steady gaze upon him.

He drew his breath for a moment, and held it. "How much right has a wife over her husband's life?" he asked presently.

"As much as he accords her—no more," was the unexpected answer.

"But that is hardly according to law—any law," he returned, surprised.

"I spoke according to stern reality, rather than according to superficial law." Then, being a rapid thinker, she added, "You can never eliminate generosity, magnanimity—call it what you will—from the relationship."

"But," he persisted, "granting some

right, where does it begin? Has she any right to his past?"

"Only in so far as the past has moulded him; she therein reckons with it, you know. The past is the present, and the present necessarily forecasts the future. You can't separate a man from his past, can you, any more than from his shadow? Although," she added after a slight pause, "in the high noon of a woman's affection, to her there would be no shadow; the man would stand sufficient in himself, all in all."

Zoffsky's brow contracted a little, and he drew back. "Not that," he said quickly and involuntarily, "I should not care for that. Worship demands too much."

"You have had it, then?" she asked gently.

"I have had it."

There fell a significant silence, in which Mrs. Barry looked away from her betrothed. She had no air of expectancy, still less of desire, yet her manner was so sympathetic that the young man felt his opportune moment had come. Presently, not without effort, he said:

"I was very young. She was a year or two older, yet she always seemed much younger, so small, white, appealing. She was the wife, but more forlorn than the widow, of a man years older than herself, a man who was an ex—a—politically dead. The pathetic part of it is that then it seemed everything; now it seems less than nothing, except for the little—little—Estelle. The mother died when the child was a few months old. She is on one of the estates in Southern Russia. At first she was delicate. Of course I am under no obligations, I made no promises. But—but—Estelle is lovely; she has her mother's sensitiveness, and—and—large, mournful eyes. I should like the little thing to be happy, to belong to my own class, to be a member of the family. And I was in hopes that the lady who should honor me by taking my name would also consent to my keeping Estelle."

After all, he felt that it was rather

well done, that it was gracefully said. He made no appeal, he spoke as friend to friend, as equal to equal. And despite the frankness of his admission, Mrs. Barry appreciated the delicacy of a feeling that would not let her commit herself to something from which, if forewarned, she might possibly see fit to draw back. She was a good woman, with the latent, *vis inertiae* goodness that comes from good inheritance, but which is not yet individualized and made active. She felt suddenly called upon to be herself. What was that self? Engaged to be married, she never perceived till now how superficial and conventional all her intercourse with her betrothed had been. But here was a passage from life vivid to the sense as flame. What should she say, what should she do? Unconscious of Zoffsky's questioning gaze upon her she regarded him steadily, so handsome, so self-sufficient, so mundanely capable. Could she strike hands with him and go on? Or was there really for such a man any going on? She began to divine that perhaps this was the best part of him, this touch of fatherliness for Estelle. Yet is there not an old saying about the good being sometimes the enemy of the best? His attitude was obvious; it was one of generosity, of magnanimity, merely. There was no thought of responsibility, no conception of a right.

He never dreamed that Estelle had any claim upon him; there was no ideal. And an ideal is to an individual what the atmosphere is to the earth—there is no real life possible without it. Was this, then, the be-all and the end-all here? Could she marry him? She had never liked him more, nor loved him less, than at this moment, never conceived of comprehending him so fully. She sat mechanically folding and unfolding her fan, gazing straight before her; rapt in an intense inward vision. Never had she had so complete a revelation of the world within, that world with which in comparison the world without, in all its splendor, is but a darkling cave.

A slight movement on his part

roused her. She looked at him consciously, with a new expression in her face, but with a hesitation of manner he had not seen before. Her relatives and friends were enthusiastic over her engagement. They averred that she and Zoffsky were wonderfully fitting counterparts. Was it true—and the truth seemed sinister—was this delightful worldling her real counterpart?

"Boris," she began, somewhat lamely, yet with a shade of tenderness he had not before received. "Boris, count, I hope you understand how fully I—I—value your confidence. I like you the better for it, think more highly of you. I believe men judge differently about these things, but—how should *you* like to be such a child, an Ishmael, without claim or warrant, an absolute dependent on generosity and good-humored tolerance?" The question had leaped forth, not so much of her intention as of her instinct.

Zoffsky regarded her blankly. "Oh—a—the case is not so unusual. It was not a vulgar affair. It created no scandal. We were most discreet. My mother and sister never really blamed me. Estelle is very affectionate, facile, charming; she will repay regard. I have seen her at intervals. Of course, she would never conflict with any—any—other ties, any admitted obligations. All would be understood, you know. She would, of course, pass as my ward. There would never be any difficulty for you. I only wished her to be a member of the family, and that you would be so good as to supervise her upbringing. Young girls in Russia are much like young girls here."

Mrs. Barry was looking at her fiancé direct, with a large, enfolding gaze, but his physical presence was for the time being forgotten and she did not speak. It seemed as if thought was flashing upon her in waves of light, and her one fear was lest she should lose some of the effect of that auroral illumination. The things she saw by it, the things she felt, the indications, the contrasts, the inferences—could she hold them all? Her father rose

up before her, quiet, modest as a woman, the reverse of brilliant, with a life as open as a sun-swept, close-sheared field. He seemed a starting point for considerations that involved all of life. But again Zoffsky moved or spoke, and her thoughts vanished.

"Count, your little Estelle appeals to me wonderfully, pathetically; a helpless child, without lawful right or claim, yet with all a child's needs and desires! I would, of course, take her gladly, would gladly help you to do a father's part by her; but—that is—I—we are not, after all, enough alike. You have had a marvelous effect on me—I never knew myself before, never knew I had a self. I'm just the average woman; if the day is fine, the music excellent, the sermon brief, I go to church. But that's nothing. Life is more, and demands more, than I realized. And I think I ought to give more to, and ask more from, the man I marry. I—I—should not suit you. I—shrink from the thought of tacit understandings, significant silences, subterranean passages of feeling and thought. We didn't really choose each other—did we?—we just drifted together. Yet it is choice only that makes us truly individuals, that cuts us sharply off from the floating human mass. I—pardon me—want things open in the sight of all men, the—the—freedom of self-control. What can you ever justly expect of Estelle, you who have given her mere life, shorn of all its dues? Father, mother, child—why, they ought to be a sacred three, a trinity whose strength cannot be broken. And marriage ought to be something more than ours would be; something finer than the mere coalition of two social units, each giving and asking the *quid pro quo*."

Zoffsky stared at her in amazement and consternation. "But if you do not object to Estelle, then why, why? We are perfectly suited, suited in every way."

Mrs. Barry shook her head. "I doubt whether we are suited at all," she said gently, and then was silent.

She recognized that what she had

said was not only beyond his ken, but was indeed outside of his horizon. With a thrill she perceived that she was on a height above him. How had she gained it? She could not tell; one thing she knew—that being there, the obligation was laid upon her to act accordingly. But she could not make *him* see, she could not take him with her. That is the eternal tragedy of life, she thought, that two so near see nothing of the same vision. A breath of love—the first she had ever felt, that divine love which seeks to create, to give, to serve—stole in upon her. She hesitated. Could she take him and Estelle together to her heart, and strive over them? No, that was beyond her province. She must leave him to the same Power which had stirred her. She turned to him with distress in her eyes, and with quivering lips.

"Oh, if you only *saw*!" she exclaimed brokenly, and again was silent.

The count looked thoroughly nonplused and chagrined.

"Ah, dear madame, this is more than even American independence warrants! To draw back at the last moment! Surely you divined that, had you not done me the honor to signify a disposition to listen, I would have made no proposals."

"Fully, count. I exonerate you entirely; it is all my fault, all a question of ideals. I thought I had none, and you have convinced me to the contrary. You have done me an inestimable service, and I do you one in—*forbearing to marry you.* We should never agree. That would be terrible and might have an unhappy effect upon your career. For one who cannot perceive with you, cannot walk with you, each acts as dead weight to the other."

Zoffsky rose as she did. They stood gazing at each other in silence. He looked mystified and indignant. Mrs. Barry was pale, but showed an elation and certainty in her face which the count saw merely to wonder at.

"You do not object to Estelle, and yet you do object to *me*! Was there ever anything so contradictory, so incredible?"

The blood rushed to his face, his mortification was intense, and Mrs. Barry saw with regret that she had administered a sharp wound to his self-esteem.

"Dear count," she said eagerly and sweetly, "I—I—can't explain. Think me *bourgeoise, bornée*—what you will—the very fact that you do *not* understand shows how far we are apart. We are not within the same plane of mental—or, perhaps, spiritual—horizon."

But Count Zoffsky had recovered himself. "D'Auvillières was right," he said gravely; "friendship with women is impossible."

She gave him a slow, wistful look. "Yes, if life has but the material side, friendship is impossible."

He was silent. Pride was uppermost on his part; on hers a pathetic longing to quicken, if but for one instant, his inner vision. But perhaps there was no inner vision. Arrowy words that seemed to cleave to the very soul of understanding came back to her: "If the light that is in thee be darkness——"

She went with him to the very door, yearning over him. Each was dimly sensible of the gulf between them; each was desirous of speaking, and neither could say a word.



"YOU should have come to me at once, sir, as soon as you fell in love with my daughter."

"But I was too busy!"

THE EPILOGUE OF CONNY COYLE

By Owen Kildare

LISTEN! Conny Coyle and me were friends all right, and that's why I been thinking a whole lot about friendship. It ain't so easy to be a friend. For instance, in these strenuous days there's always lots o' discussions, and warm friendships ain't never improved by heated arguments. Also, sometimes, when a friend asks you for your honest opinion you got to lie like blazes or lose his friendship. And your best friend is he who knows all about you and likes you just the same.

That's why we were friends; we knew all about one another and still liked one another. But all that couldn't prevent Conny from bumping into his fate.

It was some years ago when the reformers were getting tired of theory and started in on practice. A few o' them got into the Wigwam—or were put out there—and then, knowing a few o' the tricks, they began to reform in dead earnest. They didn't play any favorites and pull didn't work for a cent, and even some of our statesmen and senators had their back rooms raided.

Until they got started in real earnest, Dan Kirby's was about as good a hang-out as any—and a little better. Of course, Kirby never had no bishop come down and sing a couple o' doxologies when business was going on the blink, but we did the best we could to make our people's inn popular, even if it wasn't in the Subway. Back o' the front bar was a nice, big room where you could sit down and have a glass o' Dutch disturbance. "Wash-

ington Crossing the Delaware" was on one side o' the wall, and a crayon picture of the Big Fellow of the Ward on the other. At night "Oyster" Brady used to perform on the piano, playing such favorites as "Let Us Mail a Bunch of Green Goods Home to Father," or something else that showed our love for the rustics.

Naturally, you swell people don't think much of our hang-outs, but what else have we? And, take it from me, I had my peep into society and seen worse behavior there than in Dan Kirby's. In society dignity is too often measured by the cut of a man's swallow-tail, and a whole lot o' them is satisfied to have more money than brains. And they talk about honor, too, but it's of the kind that pays a gambling debt and hangs up the laundryman. And the women—well, I found that the old maids lie because they want to and that the married women lie because they have to.

But that's neither here nor there and ain't telling you about Conny Coyle. He had started out with the usual ambitions. All our kids want to be policemen, fighters and bank robbers. Of course, they don't all realize their ambitions, only life insurance presidents and ice dealers do that, but Conny got to be a poorly good scrapper of more than local reputation. As soon as he got up in the business everybody was proud to know him, for, you know, hero-worship is the admiration of people till they get next to us.

Kirby's was open to anybody as long as they behaved themselves, and

a number o' girls from the stores and shops used to drift in there of an evening for a spiel or to listen to a song. And there's no use turning up your noses at them girls of ourn. I would no more give a certificate of respectability to every girl on the Bowery as you wouldn't do it for every society dame. But our girls still know how to blush and you can see it, and in society you can't see no blush for the paint that hides it. And there's a difference in their entertainments. Down our way plays like "Bertha, the Sewing-Machine Girl," are the favorites, while up your way you go to see a play for which the manager's been scouring the world and which should have been scoured good and hard before it was put on the stage.

Well, one night we were all together in Kirby's and it was the night that Conny and Nellie met. "Squeaky" Dooley was singing and some o' them liked it. He was getting money for his singing, but most of us thought it should have been hush money. None of us regulars paid much attention to what he was yodling until a girl got up to leave the place. Then Conny got wise in a minute to what kind of a ditty "Squeaky" was tra-la-la-ing, and he hollers to him, "Cut that out!"

The girl looked round and faced Conny, who was already chasing over to her to apologize on behalf of the house. The next thing we knew the two o' them was sitting in a corner, all by themselves and forgetting everybody else.

Maybe you don't know it, but down our way we do everything direct and on the level. If a fellow hates or loves, or wants to kill or be good, there ain't no possibility of mistaking him. And so you could see how it was with Conny and Nellie before long—and without opera-glasses. Yes, sir, Conny was dead in love and, let me tell you, a man who can love deeply is never past redemption.

It wasn't long before Conny and Nellie were keeping company. First, he used to lay for her in the evening,

when she was coming from work. She used to salute him with, "Hello, Conny," to which he'd answer, "The top o' the evening to you, me hot biskit," or something funny like that. After a while she got him so changed that he was up in the mornings in time to see her going to work. And in a couple o' weeks they got to be even thicker than that. They were talking about getting spliced, and to show that he meant it Conny hands over all his money to her. To be sure, he didn't have so very much, but, no matter how little, money will burn a hole in a man's pocket much quicker than in a woman's stocking.

Before long they arranged a couple o' matches for Conny, and after he won them he came round with her to open a few quarts o' the fizzy-whizzy, but most o' the dough went to her. But when you're prominent there's always a bunch o' knockers picking flaws in you—behind your back—and they did the same thing to Conny. First this one and then that one went to the girl with a story, but the more they told the less she believed. She was a sticker from 'way back.

Now, it can't be denied that Conny's thirst grew with his reputation, and there were evenings when it took the girl all she could do to keep him from getting into trouble. One night the two o' them were sitting all by themselves, and a couple o' guys at the next table, not knowing Conny, used some language in describing Nellie that shouldn't have been said before a lady. Conny jumps up to do the two o' them, which he could have done easily under ordinary circumstances—but this day he had been hitting it up all day. Before he can land on either one o' them he gets it right square in the kisser and goes down and out.

It only lasted a minute, but it was long enough to change the situation, and when he came to there was Nellie standing over him and giving it to the two bloods with a bottle right and left. In another minute she puts the two fresh guys out o' business and then picks up Conny's head and washes it

like a mother does a baby. Still, we thought that she'd drop him after that, but—didn't I tell you?—she was a stickier through thick and thin.

After that lamentable catastrophe they were even thicker than before, and everything would have been all right if it hadn't been for them reformers.

Now, don't get your dates mixed and think that we wouldn't sooner have right than wrong, but it's certainly hard to digest them reformers. When a fellow is drummed out of every party he starts in on the reforming business; but even some o' them have gone where Boss Tweed went to. There are lots o' people who never get their money's worth unless they kick for it. And a lot o' piggishness passes for principle. On the other hand, sometimes, a man who buys a pig in a poke don't even get a square meal o' pork chops. A reformer is generally a fellow who thinks he's an eye doctor and that he's got to fix the eyes of justice. When a man claims to be clothed in righteousness you can bet your bottom dollar it's a misfit. But you might as well give the devil his due, for he'll get it anyway.

So, as I was saying, everything was running smoothly until them reformers tumbled to Dan Kirby. One night the usual push was in there, drinking their beer and listening to the music when in bursts a bunch of agents and stool-pigeons, and pinches the whole mob. And Conny and Nellie was in amongst them.

To most of them it was a joke, because they got bailed out as soon as they got to the station-house, but Conny, whilst he was out in half an hour, couldn't get anybody to put up the bond for Nellie, because she was not acquainted—she worked for a living.

Next morning the judge—he was all right; Jim Higgins from the Fourteenth Ward—didn't do a thing but pull them agents over the coals for raiding a respectable joint, and turned them all out. But that didn't save Nellie from having gone the whole distance, station-house, prison and police court.

Maybe Conny didn't feel sore about it! He never went to bed that night, and asked me a hundred times, "What'll I do? What'll I do?"

It got him in the most tender spot, and, honest, I don't blame him. When I went to court that morning to look them over I couldn't see nothing only the girl—she looked so different from the others.

As soon as we were out in the street Conny hung back, feeling too ashamed to speak to her first. But she was a stickier—didn't I tell you?

"Say, Conny, don't you think it's poorty near time to cut out that sporting life?" she says to him, or something like it; and he just holds out his hand and grabs hers without a word.

You mightn't believe that a fellow like Conny Coyle could be affected so easily, but, honest, that raid and Nellie being in it, got him all broke up. First, he and the girl kept away from Kirby's, but habits will stick to you the same as porous plasters.

When it got to be Winter and cold nights Conny used to court her in her doorway till she went to bed, and then, for once, came into Kirby's. Everybody liked him and he got a reception that surprised him. So he came again. Then, between thinking about the girl all the time and getting put out in a couple o' fights, he got sour and took to toning up his system with red-eye. And another thing, the girl got so used to spending her evenings in Kirby's that she began to miss something. But whilst Conny never interfered with her in anything else, he wouldn't let her come there no more. Dan Kirby and Butch Thompson, who was a kind of a manager, was ordered to put her out if she should happen to come round when Conny was away.

Well, sir, a man must either come up to a woman's ideal or her ideal comes down to him. And that had Conny scared all the time. Something went wrong with his ambition. He didn't seem able to fight no more, and that was bad for the treasury. Whenever he got defeated he used to get hunk on the stuff that weakened him, and there

is no record that whiskey ever made a champion. He had no money for to take her to theaters, and she was dissatisfied with how she had to spend her evenings. They had a long courtship because Conny couldn't raise the dough to get hitched and, being a little short on conversation, he wasn't any too entertaining at a talkfest for two.

While it was this way Conny meets a fellow one day who used to hang round Kirby's some time ago, but got bit by the education bug. His name was Philips, and nobody knew where he came from. He used to have funny fits and for weeks at a time he'd keep away from Kirby's for to go to them free lectures and entertainments. Them things are always run by the goody-goody people, and after he'd been going for some time they got to noticing him. The first thing we knew they saw a whole lot o' good in him, although we'd gone blind looking for it, and got him a job as roustabout or something round one o' them settlements. And then there was no holding him.

Nothing would do but he had to wear a clean shirt every week and collars and cuffs besides, and the ties he used to put on were enough to knock your eye out. And talking! He could spout your head off with book language and to swear in his refined presence always threw him in a fit. Then, after, he got to be janitor, and then you had to mister him. He wouldn't answer to nothing only Mister Philips.

When Conny meets Mister Philips an idea comes to him.

"Say," he says to him, "you got something doing every night up at that settlement joint o' yours, ain't you?"

Mister Philips looks for a moment as if Conny's been talking in some foreign language.

"Yes," he says at last, "we have refining and educational sessions for our young people every night at the settlement."

"That's the cheese for Nellie, then," says Conny, and explains to Mister Philips that he wants to find a place where the girl can go of an evening.

Mister Philips didn't warm up to the proposition worth a cent, thinking Nellie was one o' them ordinary chip-pies, but Conny had licked him several times before and so he says for her to come round and he'll see what could be done.

When Conny tells Nellie about it she giggles and says she won't go—but she was a woman, and curious. And let me tell you, there is no idle curiosity—it's the busiest thing going. At last she agrees that she'll go up on some rainy evening when she and Conny couldn't walk along the streets and look at the things in the show windows for which they'll never have the money and which they wouldn't buy if they had the money. And a couple o' nights later it rains and Nellie trots up to the free graft at the settlement. After a while she got to liking it so well that she went rain or shine. She got greedy for refinement. In a few weeks she got talking kind o' toney and Conny began to notice the difference between their lingo. She got up to the parlor floor and he was still in the basement. But, just the same, she stuck to Conny.

One night she gives Conny a ticket for one o' them free blow-outs because she was to speak a piece. Did Conny go? Don't a cat drink milk? But she was not to know about it. He goes to Mr. Philips and tells him he'll smash his daylight in unless he'll let him in to see Nellie without her seeing him. Conny gets planted up in the loft and sees the whole show through a peephole.

She made the one hit that night and they went crazy over her reciting or whatever she was doing. After the show she came out with Mr. Philips, who thought he'd be seeing her home. She looked like a queen in her glad rags. Her eyes were all lit up with pride at her success and they were all congratulating her. But throughout all that business Conny was keeping in the shade and wouldn't go near her, while she was rubbering all over for him.

The next night she told him he did

wrong for not having come round, and that she was only proud of her hit for his sake. Conny didn't say much, but did a pile o' thinking. He had a lot o' talks with Mister Philips until that guy goes and begins spouting love to Nellie. She stands it as long as she can and then she tells Conny about it. He only laughs kind o' sour and says he can't see nothing in it.

"But how about you and me?" she says.

"Quit your kidding," says he. "A couple o' more months in the settlement and you'll be too toney for me, anyway."

"Then I'll quit it right away," she hollers. "It's you I'm after and not that refinement."

Well, maybe Conny did wrong, but he had it all thought out. When he saw that she wanted to stick he got his pots up several times and went to where she could see him. Also he got stories to her about him being no longer on the level and that the world owed him a living which he had to go out at night to collect—and with a sandbag.

As I told you before, he was a friend o' mine and I thought it about time to speak to him.

"Listen," I says to him. "Instead of showing her how bad you can be, why don't you turn your horse around and get yourself together and show her how good you can be. It might be true that the more worthless a fellow is it is the easier for some girl to marry him, but that don't fit this case. Make yourself worthy of the girl."

"What's the use?" says he. "My father died in jail, doing life; the old lady died on the Island, me only brother got croaked by the cops trying to get away, and I—oh, what's the use?"

"But she's sticking to you and believes in you," I says again. "She'll never let you go."

"I know it," he says, "and that's why I'm going to fix the game so that she can't have me. What d'you think I'm going to do? Make her life miserable?"

He fixed the game all right.

A couple o' nights later he goes out and puts some extra ventilation into a fellow's head. We all knew what he was going to get for that and he got it, too. It was "life," sure enough.

He was only in the Tombs a couple o' days before Nellie, escorted by Mister Philips, came to see him. There was nothing between her and the refined janitor and she was as true to Conny as ever. She was going to have her settlement friends see the Governor, and was going to get a lawyer and everything. But Conny wouldn't speak to her at all, only to make some awful remarks concerning her and the refined janitor. She was only human, after all, and when he gave her that sort o' talk and her loving him as she did she couldn't stand it, and got that Mister Philips to take her away. And then Conny got his "life," and it wasn't long before he was forgotten by most o' them. Them that's buried alive don't even have a tombstone lying about the good they done.

A year later Mister Philips and Nellie gets married. She spoke to me before it happened, and, when you come down to a fine point, the girl wasn't to blame.

There she was, young, a stunner for looks and as loyal and true as could be to a fellow that was scared o' himself, on account of what happened to the rest of his family; a fellow that was doing life without a chance o' getting out. It wouldn't have been fair to her to be lonely all her life because Conny didn't have so much company. Besides, when I heard about the bad remarks Conny made about her and that Philips guy in the Tombs, I tumbled in a minute that it was a cooked-up scheme o' Conny's. I went to see him and even if he didn't tell me the whole business I could read enough between the lines.

And when them two got married there came the proof.

Conny knew the date when they got spliced, and sent this letter:

SWEETHEART NELLIE:

i am glad that you got married to that

phillips fellow he's all right and a better man than me. no i don't mean that only he's better for a girl like you but i can lick him which ain't the whole thing. he don't drink and i do and no man can keep the love of a good girl by preserving it in alcohol. you are better of anyway. i did not tell the truth when i said that in the toombs about you and him. you was always too white for to do me any dirt. you was the only girl there was, nellie, and there was no finer. but i seen how the game was running and i heard about fellows giving their lifes for their girls and as i couldn't die i thought i do what i did and now i am out of the way and can't bother you no more. and i want

to give you my life for a present for your wedding because i got nothing else to give you. and dont you be worrying about me i am all right and like it fine up here and may be i get out some time when i am good and old. all you got to do is to be happy, that is all. don't write to me because a man can only stand so much and no more. so long, girl of mine, and forget,

faithfully yours,

CONNY.

And, now, wouldn't that make you tired?

But, take it from me, women ain't the only fools.



LIMITATION

By Edward Wilbur Mason

WHAT though a million daisies deck the grass,
And shyly peep through yonder pasture bars?
My fevered soul goes longing as I pass
For all the inaccessible high stars!

What though the linnet lift its tender psalm?
What though the air resound with raptured thrush?
Always I long to catch beyond the calm,
The improbable wild music of the hush!

All day my soul, immured in flesh and blood,
Struggles in shallow pond of life uncouth;
Only in sleep's unbounded ocean flood,
God! for an hour I sound what depths of truth!



THE BETTER TIME

PATIENT—Shall I wear this mask for my complexion every night?
PHYSICIAN—No, madam. Every day.



"WE couldn't make up our minds between a baby and an auto."
"But you finally——?"

"Decided on the baby. We thought he might be a little more trouble."

LA FÉE SECRÈTE

Par Lucie Delarue-Mardrus

LA toute petite orpheline et son grand-père charmant se tenaient chaque soir dans la grande cheminée. On y avait autant de place que dans une chambre, et le feu y changeait de forme selon chaque saison, depuis les bûches de Noël jusqu'aux deux ou trois tisons de l'été, rangés comme des marrons sous la cendre.

Là, on sentait autour de soi vivre la maison patrimoniale sous son chapeau de lierre, et aussi le jardin sombre qui ne finissait que dans la mer.

D'un bout de l'année à l'autre, le vieux gentilhomme racontait des histoires à sa frêle élue. Et lui-même, dans cette accoutumance, avait fini par presque croire à ses propres contes. Cela peut arriver. Il y a des petites filles qui sont si mystérieuses quand on les voit, tenant des choses dans leur tablier, revenant du jardin avec des yeux annonciateurs de trésors. On se penche sur elles, et on aperçoit, dans le tablier, des baies rouges, ou des feuilles, ou des petits cailloux. Et, sans sourire, on se tait, parce qu'on a compris que tout cela est enchanté.

Celle-ci, sur les genoux de l'aïeul, écoutait avec un regard de cinq ans qui s'hypnotisait sur le feu, et parfois le vent criait à la porte, comme une bête désolée; ou bien c'était la mer seule qu'on entendait au loin occuper l'horizon. Mais d'autres soirs étaient d'un calme tel que le premier rossignol du printemps les remplissait tout entiers. Une odeur de pluie sur la verdure, de foin chaud ou de feuilles mortes, se glissait par les fentes à mesure des époques. Puis c'était le grillon qui, de tout près, se manifestait, ou le petit esprit des bûches qui subitement sifflait.

Le conte terminé, l'enfant embrassait son grand-père, sans parler, et se laissait emporter au lit. Pourtant, elle n'oubliait jamais, pour finir, de mettre un baiser sur la bague que le vieux portait au petit doigt de la main gauche. Car, entre eux deux, il y avait une convention au sujet de cette bague. À force d'en regarder l'opale usée, ils avaient fini par décider ensemble qu'une fée l'habitait. C'était cette fée qui, lorsqu'elle remuait, faisait varier les couleurs de l'opale. Elle y promenait sa robe changeante et ses pâles yeux fantasques. Et, du fond de ce petit univers de pierre précieuse, toute puissante, cachée et minuscule, elle les protégeait.

Or, après plusieurs années de cette vie, il arriva l'inévitable. Parce que l'enfant n'était encore qu'une gamine et que le grand-père était devenu trop âgé, la mort, à l'improviste, les sépara. Un peu de toux et d'oppression pendant trois jours. Le quatrième il s'éteignit.

Avait-il compris qu'il partait? La veille de sa fin, et comme il se trouvait seul un instant avec sa petite complice en merveilleux, il lui avait, sans une parole, passé la bague trop grande à son index rouge et gonflé de gosse, avec un signe qui voulait dire: "Garde-la." Et ils avaient alors échangé un regard dans lequel ils exprimaient tout.

Faut-il préciser par quelles sortes de combinaisons successives cette mort et les affaires d'héritage qui s'ensuivirent changèrent les destinées de la vieille propriété? Il y a des malheurs aussi dans la vie des maisons. Celle-ci, sous son chapeau de lierre, dut sentir son âme ancienne et délicate l'abandonner quand le maître, mort, franchit le

seuil dans sa longue bière et que la petite fille, en deuil et en sanglots, s'en alla vers ailleurs.

Elle échoua dans un quartier noir de Paris, chez une tante pauvre. Un jour faux stagnait à travers deux pièces étroites. Par les fenêtres, on voyait le mur de la cour et un bout de toit. Le seul morceau de ciel perdu sur ces choses verdâtres n'était pas plus grand qu'un mouchoir. Et comme, vaguement, le bruit des rues montait, affirmant la laideur de la vie positive, dès la première minute de sa nouvelle existence, l'enfant sanglotante comprit qu'elle ne parlerait plus jamais des fées.

La tante était une "bonne personne" selon l'impression que suscite ce terme. Par quelques clichés sur les revers de fortune et la perte de ceux qu'on aime, elle fit de son mieux pour consoler la gosse douloureuse. Puis, sans perdre de temps, elle lui enseigna les secrets de la vie gênée, l'envoya à l'école primaire du quartier et, puisque la fillette allait sur ses dix ans, lui fit, entre ses leçons, raccommoder des bas et prendre soin du ménage.

D'ailleurs, on ne se voyait guère que le soir. Et parce que, autour de la lampe à pétrole sous laquelle on mangeait et cousait, les conversations avaient la couleur et la forme des journées, l'orpheline aux yeux interloqués, sans savoir pourquoi, ne raconta pas l'histoire de son opale. Elle évita même de porter la bague. Elle la tenait enveloppée de ouate, dans une petite boîte de bois, tout au fond du tiroir où ses effets étaient rangés. A la première interrogation sur ce sujet, elle avait répondu en pleurant que c'était un souvenir de son grand-père. Et il n'en avait plus jamais été question. La tante pensa: "Cette enfant est renfermée." Et ce fut tout.

Cependant, lorsque par hasard, le soir venu, la ménagère s'éloignait pour quelque-une de ses pauvres courses, la nièce courait à son tiroir. Rougissante comme une coupable, son cœur gros se mettait à battre très fort. Et, dès que l'opale était à son doigt, on eût dit que cette lueur éclairait tout le quartier noir. L'enfant ne savait plus rien du

mur d'en face, du bout de toit et du morceau de ciel. Elle s'asseyait dans un coin, seule avec sa bague, seule avec son rêve. Pour un instant, se calmait sa nostalgie déchirante. La fée évoquée agissait comme font les bonnes marraines, et la grêle filleule, dans les jeux de couleur de la pierre versatile, retrouvait tout ce qu'elle n'avait plus.

Les soleils couchants, qu'autrefois on contemplait au bout de la campagne, ne s'étaient-ils pas réfugiés un à un dans cet étroit espace? N'était-ce pas leur flamme qui couvait là, dans ce point brûlant?... Tout à coup, un revers de main chavirait les nuances, recréait un autre monde. C'était le clair de lune sur le jardin, avec ses gouttes de clarté tombant à travers les branches. Puis cela devenait un des tisons de la cheminée où le grand-père racontait. C'était l'arc-en-ciel qu'on avait vu un jour, après la pluie, au-dessus de la maison. Et, subitement, c'était la mer. En portant la bague à l'oreille comme on fait des coquillages, on eût peut-être entendu la voix qui occupe les horizons...

Mais ce qu'on distinguait certainement le mieux dans le chaton incendiaire, c'était les toilettes de la fée. Cette dame exigue, à travers l'opale, traînait fastueusement les robes de Peau-d'Ane. Robe couleur du temps, robe couleur de la lune, robe couleur du soleil... De joie, la petite fille éclatait de rire: "Vite, vite, où sont mes lunettes noires?" Et, brusquement, au bruit de sa propre gaieté, elle se réveillait de ses songes. Les trésors s'éteignaient. L'opale n'était plus qu'un seul œil, un œil décoloré comme ceux des morts et qui, sans pupille, rond et triste, la fixait.

Alors la tante rentrait. Au bruit qu'elle faisait, il fallait prestement cacher la bague, avec un dernier baiser furtif sur la pierre versicolore, palais mignon et magnifique du merveilleux.

Un jour vint où la petite tomba malade. Elle approchait de cet âge qu'on appelle ingrat pour le rendre un peu ridicule et qui est, en réalité, le plus pathétique. Age ingrat, retour d'âge de

l'enfance, triste revers de la première existence, où la poésie innée des années commençantes va sombrer dans la puberté, se perdre pour toujours dans le prosaïsme des *grandes personnes*. En vérité, les seuls poètes sont ceux en qui l'enfance n'est pas tout à fait morte...

Devenue donc un peu plus pâlotte, la petite mystérieuse prit le lit. Malgré sa pauvreté, la tante effrayée appela le médecin. Alors, dans ces deux pièces malheureuses, en même temps que le grand drame de cette âme d'enfant qui ne s'était révélée à personne depuis la mort du grand-père, se joua la piètre tragédie du manque d'argent en face de la maladie coûteuse et du terme à payer: toutes péripéties cachées qui, en général, composent l'existence des petites gens et leur sculptent, à la longue, ce morne visage habitué.

Or, comme les soucis augmentaient, il arriva qu'un matin la tante sortit clandestinement, laissant la petite malade assoupie dans son lit.

Par quel avertissement intérieur connut-elle cette solitude momentanée? Redressée dans ses oreillers pour la première fois depuis huit jours, elle regarda autour d'elle, et un pauvre sourire détendit sa petite figure absorbée. Faible, longue, se tenant aux meubles, elle alla en chancelant jusqu'à son tiroir. La boîte de bois trembla dans ses mains. Elle l'ouvrit.

La bague n'y était plus.

Dans quel état, en rentrant, la trouva sa tante! Retournée à son lit, la gamine semblait assassinée. Aux premières paroles, reprenant tout à coup de la force, elle se prit à crier avec des larmes si insensées, à réclamer sa bague avec une telle véhémence que la tante courut d'un trait chez le médecin.

— Elle a le délire! Elle va mourir! répétait-elle entre deux sanglots.

Et le brave médecin se hâta dans les escaliers, secouant sa vieille tête de bonhomme compatissant.

Assis au bord du lit, il interrogea avec beaucoup de bonté. Mais il était si étranger au destin de cette enfant! Et elle, sans rien voir, sans rien écouter, redemandait éperdument sa bague, hurlait vers son rêve, vers son grand-

père, vers ses grands feux, vers son passé... Toute son âme, pour la première fois, s'exprimait, alors que les deux témoins incompatibles et désolés de cette âme ne pouvaient rien comprendre au grand appel qu'elle leur jetait.

Enfin, la tante rougissante dut avouer au médecin la misère dont elle avait honte. Elle était allée, le matin même, porter la bague au Mont-de-Piété. Elle montrait, en pleurant, la reconnaissance. Comme la monture de cette bague était en or et assez lourde, on lui en avait donné quarante francs. Et sa bouche inconsciente et sacrilège prononça tristement ce blasphème:

— Quant à la pierre, il paraît qu'elle n'a aucune valeur...

On voit le joli geste du médecin tendant les deux doigts à la pauvre femme en lui disant d'aller reprendre la bague et de revenir vite.

Accoudé au pied du lit, il attendit patiemment. La malade, sans plus le regarder, sans plus rien dire, pantelait. Dès qu'elle entendit la porte se rouvrir, elle s'exclama:

— Ma bague?

Et la tante, ouvrant la main, la lui tendit comme une étoile.

Alors, cette enfant si douce eut un mouvement brutal. Saisissant la bague en silence, elle la porta à sa bouche avec tant de rudesse que la pierre fanée se fendit sur ses dents, et que ses lèvres fiévreuses, coupées par le choc, se mirent à saigner. Et voici que, regardant avec des yeux fous son opale lésardée et tachée de sang, elle se reprit à crier, disant:

— Du sang! Du sang!... Ils ont tué la fée! Ils ont tué la fée!

C'est pourquoi, impatientés, le médecin et la tante crurent bon de la gronder un peu. Au cri funèbre qu'elle poussait, ils répondirent par la raison, cette chose morne:

— Allons, firent-ils, qu'est-ce que tu dis donc? Est-ce qu'il y a des fées? Il faut rester tranquille, à la fin! Tu n'es plus une enfant, tu sais!

Et la fillette, comme frappée d'un grand coup, se tut. Les mains retombées, elle regardait tour à tour sa

bague et les deux grandes personnes fâchées, avec des prunelles où le merveilleux trépassait.

Car elle venait de comprendre que son royaume était perdu, le royaume de l'enfance auquel tout être doit re-

noncer un jour. Il allait falloir entrer dans la douleur banale de vivre. Et, à cause de cela, son cœur de petite femme se fendait dans sa poitrine, comme l'opale heurtée où la fée, doucement, achevait de mourir.



TO A LOST COMRADE

By Grace Duffield Goodwin

SPRING came and went; I did not see
Her footsteps on the grass;
I missed the tender minstrelsy
Of birds that watched her pass.

Spring came and went; I did not hear
Her filmy garments stir;
I only felt that she was near,
And grieved because of her.

For you and I have followed Spring
Far as her feet can stray;
And now—what matters anything
Since you have gone away?



THE AGE OF EXPENSE

"NCESSITIES have been rising rapidly, haven't they?"
"Oh, yes, indeed. It costs nearly twice as much as five years ago to secure a divorce."



FAR REMOVED

"AREN'T you going to speak to your father and mother?"
"Dear me, no! They don't move in our set."

IN A SILENT HOUSE

By E. J. Rath

THE man who had been standing on the terrace now stepped quietly through the French window, stood for a moment with his head bent forward, listening, and then gently closed the casement. He was in the dining-room, where the only rays came from a weak moonlight that filtered imperfectly through the shrubbery and evergreens that bordered the big house.

Very cautiously he rested on the floor a small grip that he had been carrying, and for a little space he remained motionless, his ears strained to catch the slightest sound, his eyes wandering ceaselessly around the somber room, searching its gloomy corners. Presently he began to move forward with noiseless steps, advancing almost timidly, as a man might walk among pitfalls. In this manner he passed around an oval table that stood in the centre and threaded a path between chairs that brought him to the threshold of the entrance to the hall. Here he halted again.

A dim light was burning in the hall, near its further end. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the meager illumination and he could see objects quite clearly in this high-ceilinged and severe apartment. The stairway and its heavily carved balustrade ascended into the blackness above. Everywhere there was the same stillness; he made sure of this by standing with his mouth open, breathing softly. Across the hall and half-a-dozen paces further on stood a wide doorway, and through that he could see the faint reflection of another light.

He nodded his head unconsciously and turned back into the dining-room, moving quietly over the heavy rugs. Near the window he picked up his grip, then retraced his route to the hall, stopping at its threshold again to listen. There were no rugs in the hall, but he stepped out on its smooth surface confidently, crossing it diagonally to the other doorway. He moved with the stillness of a shadow. So did the yellow thing that came from out of the gloom in the dining-room, stepping carefully in the man's track, advancing when he advanced and halting when he halted.

The library was large and formal, almost oppressively rich for a country mansion. Here there were more rugs, which the man observed with satisfaction, for they deadened footfalls. To the left of the entrance, as he paused at the threshold, was a fireplace, where wood embers still glowed redly. A long, massive table held the centre of the room. On all sides the walls were wainscoted with shelves. There were chairs, a writing-desk, some small tables and other furniture scattered profusely. In the far corner stood a safe. A table light was burning low, making black shadows. These things the man noted with swift glances. He stepped across the room and rested his grip close to the safe, where he knelt for a moment and examined the smooth steel door, gently fingering the knob. His hands were half numbed, for the air was sharp outside, and he breathed on them and chafed them together. Then he remembered the fire and crossed over to it, where he

knelt again and extended his hands out over the smoldering logs, suppling his fingers.

The yellow thing had watched all this from the threshold, where it had stopped, and the man did not see it until he had warmed his hands and was half risen from his knees. A faint gasp escaped him and he sank back on the rug again, mechanically. The dog stood motionless as a carved image, and silent. For a brief second the man doubted its actual presence, for he knew that he had passed no such thing as he crossed the threshold. But as the red illumination from the fireplace concentrated itself into two little points of brightness, deep back in the eyes that gazed at him unwinkingly, he knew that it was a tangible thing. The dog was big, yellow and unhandsome. It stood tall at the shoulder, long and thick in the legs, somewhat angular in frame. Its coat was short and smooth, so that the muscled neck and shoulders stood in relief.

For a minute the man and the dog were posed thus, searching each other's eyes and each taking the measure of the other in silence. Then there was a quiver in the yellow body and the dog made a single step forward, slowly, like the tread of a cat. The movement expressed caution, not hesitation. The man, his hands inert at his sides, noted the pliant play of muscles in the shoulders, the wide, deep chest, the sinewy neck, now stretched well forward, the heavy, roughly formed jaw. There was something suggestive of the brawn of a wrestler. The dog paused, his weight thrown forward as if for further advance. While the man gave rapid consideration to this new situation, he found a certain morbid fascination in studying the great yellow body. He had never seen a dog that moved like a cat, or a dog with eyes like a cat, so that they glowed with a light that seemed to come from within. Neither had he met a silent dog like this one.

It was a puzzled, baffled sensation that the man first became aware of. He was not frightened, and he knelt there very calmly, eying the dog

steadily. He was rather curious to know what it wanted and what it was going to do about it, this strange animal that let him enter unmolested and now came upon him as silently as the house was itself. There was nothing hostile in its attitude as it stood there, three paces away, yet there was something indefinably hostile in the animal itself.

The man thought he would experiment, and he moved a hand slightly. The dog observed the motion by a swift dropping of his eyes, but they came back to the man's face again instantly. There was no stirring of the yellow body. More ostentatiously now the man moved the other hand, but still the dog remained motionless. Not a sound came from the full, white throat; the dog was breathing as softly as the man himself. The experiment had told nothing, so the man tried another. He arose slowly from his knees to an erect position. The only responsive motion was a slight lifting of the dog's head, so that its eyes could meet his at the higher altitude. There was no satisfaction and nothing learned in this. He would try another test.

Cautiously the man thrust one foot backward and then drew the other after it, so that he moved a pace away from the dog. The gain in distance was not permitted. The dog moved a catlike step forward, making up the interval, and the man made a mental note that its single stride measured with his. He paused for a few seconds, considering the effect of the manœuvre, and then stepped backward another pace. Again the dog recovered the distance. The firelight no longer fell in its eyes and now the man saw that they were a pale yellow, tawny, like the smooth coat. Lithe, alert, silent, the dog stood with head thrust forward. From his kneeling position the man had believed that its bulk was deceptively large, but now as he looked down upon the broad back he found that there had been no deception. It was heavy in bone and muscle—probably as heavy as himself. Thrice again the man stepped backward cautiously, a pace at

a time, and the dog followed noiselessly.

Now the man paused for more consideration. He was gaining nothing by this; it was bringing him no nearer to the business in hand. Besides, he felt that he was getting nervous, and this was bad, for the night's work might go for naught. The mystery of the dog's silence annoyed him; he had a growing impression that somehow he was being tricked. He had an impulse to glance behind him, but he resisted it, for he felt that it was better to watch the yellow eyes. There was something foolish about the situation; he felt cheap. After all, it was but a dog. He did not fear possible conflict, only the danger of noise. Himself barehanded, he knew that it was no match between him and the dog, but his hand moved gently and confidently to his coat pocket, where a touch reassured him. It was there, in instant readiness, yet he knew he must not use it, for then, beyond all doubt, his work was at an end.

He decided to reverse the order of the experiment. Gently he made a step forward, watching sharply for the effect it might produce. There was none. The dog remained motionless, giving no ground, the inscrutable yellow eyes unwinking. The man spoke in a low tone, his hand half extended in a gesture of comity. There was no sign of response. He made another step forward, and this brought them still closer.

Now there did come a change. The dog's coat, along the neck and back, no longer lay smooth, but was rising slowly. A glint of fangs showed as the black gums were drawn back, giving the mouth a sneer. The muscles in the shoulders were formed into little knots. Almost imperceptibly the yellow body inclined forward, to meet him. The man's hand moved swiftly to his pocket and he stepped backward.

Then he found that he had lost a pace; for the dog came forward as he retreated, the white teeth still grinning at him under the wrinkled gums. Very carefully the man slid his hand into his pocket, and as he slipped his fingers

around the cool handle of a revolver a breath which he had involuntarily caught escaped him in a soft sigh of relief. There was a certain reassurance in the touch of the pistol as he drew it forth. This accomplished, he stood quite still, watching the grin slowly fade from the dog's face as the gums closed again over the long teeth, and observing that the yellow coat had become smooth again. But the man did not take this for a sign of friendliness. Besides, the dog was closer now, perhaps within the distance of a single spring. He spoke again, soothingly, and extending his hand. This time it was the one that held the pistol. The yellow eyes regarded him coldly and the tawny body remained motionless, waiting.

Perhaps it was time to go, the man thought. He did not reason to that conclusion, but reached it instinctively. There was nothing he could do here. Of course, it would please him to shoot, straight between the unwinking eyes, but he knew that that was foolishness, except in the last resort. The nervousness was coming back to him, the uncertain, uneasy feeling that urged him to look behind. He did not know how long he could fight that off, although he pitted against it his reason, that told him he must always watch the yellow eyes. So he came to understand that he must yield the field, yet he went about it with a dull anger.

First, there was his grip, left standing by the safe. That was some dozen paces distant, but he knew the direction in a general way and he began the journey carefully, one hand extended behind him to feel his way, the other, holding his weapon, thrust slightly forward. Step for step they moved down the room, the dog matching every stride with a calm precision. The room seemed longer now. Once the man stumbled into a chair which his hand had failed to locate, and he recovered himself with a slight scuffling. Just for an instant his eyes wavered and then they flashed back into the yellow orbs again. The dog had halted and the teeth once more were bared

into a grin. The man remained motionless for a moment and then resumed the journey more slowly. The hand that explored behind him was trembling slightly, but the other gripped the pistol firmly enough.

A backward thrust of his foot told him that he had reached his grip and he began to reach downward for it. The dog grinned again, the hair slowly erected itself and the tawny throat began to swell. Then there issued from it a very soft, husky, low-toned note that stopped the hand half-way and left the man crouched and rigid. He waited till the sound died away and then moved his hand downward, so slowly that he was sure the motion was not apparent. But the husky note rose again and the hand stopped.

The man was beginning to understand a new thing. He might go, perhaps, but he must go with empty hands. He resented this, but considered it calmly enough. After all, the grip was of no particular account, and now he wondered why he had made that long journey down the room, just to recover it. Rather than dispute the matter, he would let it go. So he arose from his stooping posture, taking a new bearing with a furtive side glance. Then he stepped off at a new angle, so as to avoid the grip on the floor, and moved backward toward the wall. The dog followed, catlike. The man thought he detected a sort of insistent urging now, for the steps no longer followed his, but coincided, rather, with no pauses between. He increased his pace. This brought him suddenly with his back against the shelves, forcing a halt.

Five feet distant stood the dog. The noise in its throat had risen to a snarling whine that seemed to voice a yearning. Half-a-dozen paces to the man's left lay the doorway of the hall. He began to work his way toward it, crab-wise, a few inches at a time. It was slow work, walking in this fashion, and he guided himself cautiously with his left arm stretched out against the book-cases. The dog imitated his movement, satisfied when the man

moved along steadily, grinning and snarling softly when a piece of furniture interrupted progress for the moment. The pistol hand was wavering a little now and the man wondered whether he could still shoot between the eyes, if it came to that.

Presently his guiding arm swept into emptiness, telling him that he had reached the doorway. Here he paused a moment more, trying to fix in his mind the direction of the path across the hall. He could not turn his head to see, for the dog was whining again and the yellow coat bristling. It had learned that a man could be driven, and it wanted to drive, or—the man shivered a little, for he knew that he was afraid. Yes, and the dog knew it, too. The man swallowed something in his throat, slipped hastily around the frame of the doorway and stepped backward into the hall, the dog following close, his head thrust a little lower now and extended. Straight across the hall the man backed his way until he felt his shoulders touch the opposite wall, and then he continued the crab-like movement in the direction of the dining-room.

It became darker as he moved down the hall; it was with a slight feeling of nausea that he remembered that it was even dimmer in the dining-room. Had there been some other way to go he would have chosen it, but he knew none and something told him that he was pressed for time. As his step faltered the dog urged again, significantly, and the light in the pale eyes flared a little brighter. Again the man's arm swept into open space and he was on the threshold of the dark room. He breathed deeply a couple of times and then stepped backward hesitatingly, trying to remember the arrangement of the furniture and the location of the window. But he could not pause for calculation for the yellow body was edging closer and it loomed larger as it was silhouetted in the doorway.

So he walked backward, as nearly as possible in a straight line, wavering a little at each step. This brought his back against the oval table, and his

hand groped on its smooth surface for an instant as he steadied himself. A soft, whining growl bade him go on. The yellow eyes seemed scarce two feet from the point of his revolver. As he moved slowly around the edge of the table a sharp, intermittent hissing sound came to his ears. For a moment he thought that this was the breathing of the great animal that followed in the darkness; then he discovered that it was his own. His face was wet, too, and a cold drop trickled across his forehead and ran down his cheek. It seemed very far to the window.

By an effort of will he relinquished his steady grip on the table and stepped backward again into open space, his arm stretched behind him. The open spaces had come to be terror spots, for they made the fear grow in his heart. Backed against a wall, he knew that nothing could come at him from behind, but now there was the possibility that something—he did not know what—might come out of the darkness, noiseless as the great yellow dog that faced him, and— He hastened his step involuntarily, ran into a chair and lurched sideways, almost losing his balance. The dog whined again in higher key and the pale eyes drew a few inches nearer. The man recovered himself, gasping, and discovered that his legs were carrying him badly. He felt no sensation of physical weariness, but rather one of weakness.

He moved past the chair into a spot where there was a shimmer of white light on the floor and knew that he was nearing the window. He cursed as he remembered that he had closed and latched the casement. "God!" he said huskily, half aloud, as the dog advanced into the square of light. First the padded, stealthy feet crept into view; then, as the light struck higher, the muscle-ribbed chest and throat; then the head and its heavy jaw, where the gums wrinkled back and the long, even teeth, slightly parted, shone.

The man's left hand groped shakily

and felt the cool surface of a window-pane. He slid his fingers along this until they reached the sash and there they fumbled for the catch, but it seemed to elude him. Suddenly he recalled that it was set high and the sick feeling came to him again as he wondered whether a man could reach it with his hand behind his back. He bent his arm at the elbow, bringing his hand up between his shoulders, but still his fingers groped uselessly against the smooth frame of the window. He wanted to turn and tear at the casement with his hands, but the dog was whining shrilly again. He feared it as he stared into the yellow eyes, but he feared more to turn his head. He raised himself on his toes and now his hand touched something. Awkwardly his fingers fumbled at the catch. It would be easier if they did not shake so, he thought, but he could not stop them from shaking.

There was a sharp click as the catch yielded and the man felt a cool breeze on his neck as the wind started the sash open. He slipped his fingers around the edge and braced himself for an instant, holding the window on a narrow crack. The crisis had come now and he would soon know. Impulse bid him fling the sash wide and run, but he fought this, for he knew it was folly. He must pass out just as he had made the long journey from the library, facing the dog and trying to play that he was not afraid. It stood clearly outlined again, and closer, the head bent forward and downward, so that the snarling muzzle was but a foot from the hand that held the pistol. The weapon had drooped pitifully; once it had almost slipped from his grasp, for the palm was wet and flabby. Again the man breathed deeply, and then he began to draw the sash open slowly, moving slightly to one side so that it might swing past his body.

The whining of the dog ceased and he saw the muscles in the throat move convulsively. The yellow body crouched, still catlike in movement. He slipped a leg sidewise through the

half-open window, holding the sash so that it would swing no wider than need be. As his foot felt the stone surface of the terrace the panic came on him again. The hand that held the pistol shook limply and the weapon slipped from his fingers and dropped to the floor, ringing noisily. But his body had passed the aperture and he pulled the casement after him swiftly,

hearing the click of the latch as it snapped into place.

He saw a wrinkled, white-fanged muzzle pressed close against the pane, and two pale eyes, still watching him unwinkingly. He turned, leaped the low railing, sprawled limply on the grass below, then struggled to his feet and ran staggering into the darkness, sobbing.



NOCTURNE

By Gertrude Huntington McGiffert

DEAR one, could it be so
That I should love and thou not know,
Let be, nor pity me, my life is sweet because of thee!

And dear, should it be so
That thou dost love and I not know,
What matters it to thee or me? Love has eternity!



NO CAUSE FOR WORRY

"SUPPOSE, doctor, this operation doesn't succeed?"
"My dear fellow, if it doesn't you'll never know it."



HIS CHOICE

THE MOTHER (*to her son*)—Your father and I are about to separate. Robert,
you will have to decide which you will live with.
ROBERT—Couldn't I live by myself?

THE TURNING POINT

By Harold Eyre

THE twilight of early June was softening the crudities of Leicester Square into an effect almost artistic as the hansom drew up at the Empire. A tall, blond chasseur of military aspect opened the doors of the vehicle and a young man descended expectantly. At the box-office he procured a seat in the Grand Circle, and a moment later was within the portals of what he had heard described as the most vicious resort in London.

It was his first visit to the Empire, and he had come because he had been given to understand that he would find there certain aspects of modern civilization which, as a student of life, it was his duty to investigate, or at least to observe.

Directing his steps to the Promenade, where his friends had told him the Empire's pulse beats fastest, he looked about him in a spirit of philosophic research. Just what it was that he expected to see he did not know, for although nearly twenty-one, he was still absurdly unsophisticated.

Perhaps he had come too early, for he saw nothing at all that looked wicked—merely a crowd of women and some men walking restlessly up and down and paying little attention to the stage. Some of the women were young and, in his opinion, beautiful, with wonderful golden hair, pink cheeks and dark eyebrows. There were also fascinating brunettes, but he preferred the blondes; they looked so spiritual and pure. All of the women were elaborately dressed, some in white lace-like costumes, others in brightly contrasted colors.

The men whom he observed did not impress him so favorably. Although nearly all in evening dress, they were evidently not all gentlemen; he saw several speak to women whom he felt sure they had not met before.

By the time he had made a few turns of the promenade, surveying everybody with the inquisitive interest of youth, he became aware that some of the women were in turn looking at him, and in a steady, inquiring fashion that embarrassed him. He even felt that he was blushing under their gaze, and as he had a horror of yielding to that childish instinct he went to his seat and began to watch the stage.

The first of the two ballets was over and some "variety" acts were in progress. There was a gentleman with a strong German accent and a face of India-rubber plasticity, who transformed himself in a twinkling into various historical personages and modern celebrities. Then appeared a Parisian young woman whose daring corsetage was without visible means of support, and who sang a French song of which the young man understood only the refrain, "*Ca fait toujours plaisir.*" But she had a habit of whisking her short skirt out behind her in a way that seemed to please the audience, for everybody applauded heartily.

And there was a funny little man who, the programme stated, enjoyed the distinction of having made the Shah of Persia laugh. He did some burlesque juggling in the course of which the stage was carpeted with broken crockery, and the young man

felt that the Shah was justified; he himself could not help laughing.

The next rise of the curtain disclosed a trapeze suspended at a giddy height above the stage. With a triumphant blare from the orchestra a girl came out from the wings and smilingly acknowledged the applause.

As she seized the suspended rope and in a graceful attitude was drawn upward to the trapeze, he studied her attentively. Her head, small, shapely, well-poised, the clear-cut lines of her profile were distinctly of Grecian type. Even her hair, of rich dark brown, was waved like the tresses of the Venus de Milo. He immediately changed his mind as to the goddesses of ancient Greece. Hitherto he had pictured them as invariably blondes; he now perceived that there must have been brunettes among them.

As the girl, having gained her perch, sat on the bar for a moment, the young man made another discovery. Her eyes were wonderful! Dark and tender, they had a look of sadness, of reverie, of unrest. Unmistakably they were the eyes of one who could dream, who could love, who could suffer.

Every movement of the gymnast, each feat of strength or exhibition of skill, the young man watched with absorbed intensity, and when, kneeling on the slender bar, she bent down and picked up a handkerchief between her teeth, he was in agony lest she lose her balance. Through it all the girl's face retained the same wistful smile, her expression never changing, even when she hung suspended by her toes, or when, in apparent defiance of anatomical laws, she dislocated her shoulder joints and cheerfully reset them.

At length, her performance finished, she descended to the stage head downward, her supple body weaving slow, graceful circles around the rope with which one ankle was entwined, while the calcium flooded her with a blaze of changing colors. At that moment the young man thrilled with a new and

strange emotion. He applauded frantically, splitting a new white glove in the process.

The remainder of the programme did not interest him. Mlle. Génée's most expressive efforts in the ballet left him unstirred, and as for some Austrian ladies in elaborate evening gowns, whose performance consisted chiefly of turning double somersaults and landing upon one another's plump, bare shoulders, he could hardly repress a shudder of disgust when he compared them with the girl of the trapeze; they were so broad and stolid, so utterly lacking in charm and grace.

Without waiting to see the biograph's trembling disclosures, he left the theatre and walked to his lodgings, where he passed hours in a critical but distinctly favorable review of the attractions of the girl in pearl-gray tights.

The following night found him again at the Empire. This time she appeared in a costume of scarlet. Less statuesque and stately than before, the vivid color revealed her in a warmly human aspect which the young man found not unpleasing.

But what impressed him even more than her beauty was her evident refinement, and beyond that, a suggestion of higher qualities, of a personality spiritual, poetic, even mystical. He wondered what had induced her to adopt a profession which must be distasteful to one of such a temperament.

Another thing that puzzled him was her nationality. Zanetta, her description on the programme, had an appropriately Oriental sound, but was doubtless not her real name, and he reflected uneasily that she might have been born in Whitechapel and christened Eliza or Mary Jane. This possibility annoyed him until he dismissed it as being too violently opposed to the inherent fitness of things.

After the second evening he booked his seat by the week and attended every performance. His regularity gave him an impressive conception of the resources of Zanetta's wardrobe, and enabled him to see her attired consecutively in all the hues of the rain-

bow, for she never wore the same color twice in succession.

And the more often he saw her the stronger grew his infatuation. He became convinced that the girl was not happy, that her work was ungenial, and that in leading the life of an acrobat she was completely out of her element. He longed to take her away from the coarse, smoke-laden atmosphere of the music-hall to a peaceful and more wholesome environment, where she would have the companionship and the devotion of someone who understood her, where she would not have to expose herself to the public gaze in scanty attire—however becoming that attire might be—and would be spared the humiliating necessity of dislocating her joints or of swinging in space suspended by her toes.

Incidentally he discovered to his surprise that there was a strong domestic side to his nature. The life he had planned to lead when his family should recognize his right to financial independence—the life of a cynical bachelor with bohemian instincts and a discreet manservant—would be, he now perceived, a dreary, selfish existence, lacking incentive and devoid of aims. Instead he liked to picture himself in a little flat, perhaps in Victoria street, conveniently near the Army and Navy Stores. (They would have to begin with a flat, until his prospects were more definite.) He saw himself in slippers at the breakfast-table, and facing him, Zanetta, in a pretty morning gown, or one of those Japanese affairs, pouring out the tea and telling him once more how happy she was that he had rescued her from that horrid life.

For it was marriage he contemplated, nothing less. Had he been a few years older, or of different temperament, he might have taken the matter less seriously. But in the simplicity of his heart no other solution occurred to him.

He realized, however, that the first essential was to make the acquaintance of his idol. Having a vague idea that

the usual form of introduction in such cases is a floral tribute, accompanied by an invitation to supper, he set himself to compose an epistle which should be a model of persuasive eloquence. After a wicked waste of stationery, he had evolved merely a brief, formal note, which he attached to an expensive bunch of roses. That night he occupied a box and cast his offering upon the stage, feeling as he did so that every eye in the house was focused upon him. The girl picked up the flowers and smiled in a way that made his heart beat wildly. With a flushed face he left the theatre and hastened to the stage-entrance in Lisle street. It was his first experience at a stage-door, and although painfully nervous, he felt a gratifying sense of importance. But the magic portal was somewhat disillusioning, and the men and women who passed through it as he waited looked commonplace and uninteresting. At last a girl came out with her arms full of roses.

He recognized her at once, yet it was with quite a shock that he beheld her in the conventional skirts of woman. Lifting his hat and speaking in a voice hoarse from fright, he uttered some indistinct phrases, but what he was saying he did not know.

Perceiving his embarrassment, she thanked him for his flowers. He discovered that she had a soft voice and spoke English timidly, with a piquant foreign accent which he judged to be Italian. "And the supper?" he ventured, having recovered a little self-possession.

"You are very kind, but I do not take supper. For my work, you see, I must be careful, and I never eat after the performance. Also," she added simply, "I do not know you well enough."

He was disconcerted. "But I should like to know you better," he said at length. "You can't think how much I want to know you."

They had reached Wardour street and she paused on the corner.

"You are funny, you men," she remarked, with her quaint fashion of

separating her words. "You have only seen me from the front, in the limelight. You do not know what I am like—you know nothing of me. Why should you wish to know me?"

He explained feverishly that from the first moment he saw her he had wished to know her, continuing with an earnestness and conviction which might have been impossible could he have realized his appalling lack of originality, or how many countless times the thing had been said before.

She listened gravely until, his dissertation finished, he begged to be allowed to escort her home.

"I am afraid it would be too far for you. I live on the other side of the river, near Kennington Road—and I always walk."

He said that the distance was absurdly short, and that walking was a passion with him. Had she lived at Stratford, Bow or in Epping Forest his answer would have been the same.

As they started in the direction of Westminster Bridge it struck him, to his surprise, that she was somewhat shy, an unexpected quality in anyone connected with the stage. The discovery reinforced his own self-possession, which otherwise might have left him stranded. He inquired about her work, its hardships and its dangers, the training necessary to keep her in condition, and whether she had ever lost her nerve or met with an accident. When she told him of a fall in the Winter Garden at Berlin which had kept her for nine weeks in a hospital he shuddered with a sympathy so intense and so imaginative that for the moment he could scarcely walk; he seemed to feel in his own body the shocks and bruises she had sustained.

As to her habits, she slept long, took much exercise and read a great deal. The last was promising, but his spirits fell when she confessed a predilection for the works of Miss Corelli and "The Duchess." He resolved to send her some volumes of Ruskin and to formulate a graduated course of reading, a ladder on which she might climb by

easy steps to the rarefied atmosphere of the classics.

When he said good night at the door of her lodgings he had obtained permission to see her the following evening, and he went home intoxicated with triumph. He had met her, had talked to her, and she had talked to him! And all this would happen again!

She was all that he had hoped, and more. He discerned a noble simplicity of character, an engaging frankness, a nature gentle and unassuming and a mind, untrained, perhaps, but reflective, original and capable of rising—under judicious guidance—to lofty heights of culture. Above all did he rejoice in her refinement of speech and manner. Without that, her other qualities would have gone for nothing.

As he was falling asleep that night a disturbing thought came: there might be someone else whom she cared for; she might even be married. The contemplation of these contingencies kept him awake until daylight.

Zanetta's greeting the following evening encouraged the hope that she was glad to see him, and by what he flattered himself was a triumph of subtle and unsuspected cross-examination he learned that she was not married and had no sentimental entanglements. Furthermore, after a little persuasion, she promised to dine with him the following Sunday. This he regarded as a decided step forward; there was something sociable and intimate in the prospect of a meal together. She suggested a restaurant in Old Compton street, where, she said, they did things in real Italian style; but he, wishing to honor the occasion, urged the attractions of the Carlton. He had in mind a little corner table at the Pall Mall end of the restaurant, a table with flowers and silk-shaded lights, which had often appealed to him in passing the windows. To this project she demurred, having an evident preference for her native cuisine. But when the evening arrived and he told her, as they got into the cab, that the table had been reserved, she yielded.

As they drove off he was trembling

with joy. The whole thing was so astonishing. Of her own free will she was there by his side, so close to him, in fact, thanks to the delightfully narrow construction of hansoms, that her shoulder nestled against his as if in unconscious embrace. He did not speak. Under such circumstances a commonplace remark would have been sacrilege, and he could think of nothing to say that seemed appropriate.

They were crossing Westminster Bridge, and he looked out upon the Thames, in its placid Sunday-evening mood, with a new and keen perception of the beauties of London. As they passed Big Ben he ventured, with a boldness which astonished himself, to take her hand in his, at the same time murmuring "Dearest!" in tones of deep emotion. She did not resist; his cup of happiness brimmed over.

He was extremely sorry when the cab stopped and the sweet intimacy of the drive was at an end. But once installed at their table his spirits rose as he regarded her admiringly. She was dressed in pink; the material he did not recognize, but it was a tight-fitting affair which revealed her rounded figure to great advantage. And her hat was no doubt charming, though it seemed to him a trifle large and gay. But her eyes, her hair, the delicacy of her features and the appealing charm of youth and splendid health, these he could not sufficiently admire.

Looking about him, he made gratifying comparisons between his guest and the pale, fragile women at adjoining tables. "I say," he remarked to his companion, with a significant glance toward the thin arms and scrawny necks and shoulders so bravely displayed, "*they* wouldn't look well on a trapeze, would they?"

Zanetta laughed gleefully and allowed her plump forearms to rest upon the table. It seemed, indeed, as if the ladies were conscious of their own imperfections, for they gazed at the girl with such evident curiosity that the young man felt sure they were admiring her.

The selection of the menu caused

him serious thought. It was a task which tried him, even when he was alone; he found it hard to choose from among so many things. But on this exceptional occasion his perplexity and vacillation were pitiful. In the end, after conferring with his guest, he ordered a repast of marked Italian characteristics, including minestrone, risotto à la Milanese, the inevitable spaghetti and some white chianti.

This ordeal over, the young man's brow cleared and he settled down for an evening of happiness. In high spirits, he was unusually loquacious and his jests while awaiting the arrival of the dinner kept the girl in a ripple of laughter.

Alas, when the first course was served, he received the most painful shock of his life—his divinity ate like a peasant! She took her soup with an accompaniment so audible that it drew the astonished attention of everyone near their table. The fish and the entrée were likewise the subject of uncouth eccentricities.

From the young man's early youth a peculiar delicacy and sensitiveness had made him a devotee of ultra refinement at the table. Eating and drinking seemed to him at best such gross animal functions that they should be performed with all possible daintiness. Any crudity of deportment at meals he regarded as a serious offense, and from restaurants he had often departed hurriedly, his plate untouched, on beholding the substitution of a knife for a fork, the use of a toothpick or the digital grasp of a bone.

And now! Could this be the woman whom he had idealized as the apotheosis of feminine grace and refinement, whom he had set upon a pedestal and crowned with a halo of romance, worshipping her humbly as something almost too divine for earthly love! His cheeks burned with mortification and shame, and, unable to eat a mouthful himself, he awaited in agony and dread the arrival of subsequent courses.

Completely unconscious of his state of mind, the girl attacked each dish with

the zest of a generous appetite, natural enough, the young man mournfully reflected, in view of her superb health and the expenditure of muscular energy which her work involved.

With the spaghetti came the climax. Being a dish in which she evidently reveled, and one allowing free scope for spectacular effect in the consumption, he passed a bad quarter of an hour. He had once seen a comedian eat spaghetti on the stage with a fine perception of its possibilities for vulgar display, and it occurred to him that Zanetta might have given that comedian valuable points. Intensely susceptible to the opinions of others, and with a morbid horror of attracting attention in public, the glances of surprise, amusement and disgust which he saw directed to his companion pierced him like knives.

A wild desire seized him to run away. He thought of feigning sudden illness—anything to escape, but as that might make him even more conspicuous, he resolved to await the end. Zanetta grew talkative with the advent of coffee and liqueurs, and the young man, suddenly mindful of his duties as host, endeavored to conceal his agitation and appear at ease. The attempt was a dismal failure, and as soon as he decently could he paid the bill and they left the restaurant.

They drove back almost in silence. She was, he could see, mystified by the change in his manner, but to save his life he could not have conquered his depression, and it was with a feeling of intense relief that he bade her good night.

He walked across the bridge and entered the Victoria Embankment and for hours wandered up and down along the river-front. The whole world was changed; his dreams had turned to nightmares and he had lost the hope which had become the star of his life. It was all over; she could never be anything to him now.

And yet, why? he asked himself with torturing analysis. A few hours ago he had loved her madly. For her sake he would have undertaken any

sacrifice that a human being could make, would cheerfully have given up his life, if need be. At seven o'clock—nay, even at eight o'clock that evening, she had been the supreme passion of his life. Now all was changed, the divine flame had departed. And all this because her deportment at table did not please him! He had believed that his devotion would emerge triumphant from any test. Had she acknowledged the most shameful past he felt that he could have taken her to his arms, happy in the thought that her future, at least, would be his. But because he did not like the way she used her knife and fork—or her soup-spoon, forsooth—the situation was farcical, it was grotesque.

He tried to look at the matter from all points of view, from her standpoint as well as his own. Surely she was inherently still the same adorable creature as before; nothing in her had changed. She was merely unacquainted with the usages of polite society, which, after all, were superficial and arbitrary, and if her attention were called gently and with tact—but on the instant he perceived how impossible it would be for him ever to approach the subject. No, the thing was inevitable. And even if it were not, even if she acquired the deportment of a duchess, she could never be the same to him again. Something had gone forever; the ideal he had worshiped in her was irrevocably shattered.

But that which hurt him most deeply, which made him writhe in agonies of self-contempt and humiliation was the discovery of his own shortcomings. What kind of man was he, what a small, shriveled soul must he possess, if a passion he had thought divine could evaporate in an hour for a reason so absurdly insignificant and trivial! He had flattered himself that his was a strong, deep nature, endowed with a supreme capacity for love, that he was one of the few who could experience an intense, consuming passion.

Maddened by the disclosure of his degradation, by this convincing proof of his utter unworthiness, he suffered such tortures of despair that for a time he contemplated ending his miseries in the Thames. At last, worn out by its struggles, his mind grew calmer, and on passing a cabman's shelter, he suddenly became aware that he was ravenously hungry. It occurred to

him that, having eaten nothing since early in the day, much of his mental anguish might be due to the reflex of physical cravings.

"Farewell, Illusion!" he cried in a tone which he felt to be that of high tragedy, "henceforth I am a Materialist!"

And entering the hospitable green door, he ordered a hearty meal.



THE STEIN SPEAKS

By Arthur Upson

HAVE a cheer,
Boys, on me!
But I'm not
For my state
To be reckoned
To blame:

I'm a mug—
And no good
Till I'm full:
Be not ye,
Jolly fellows,
The same!



THE PRESSING NEED

NODD—These new baby-carriages are simply great. When you are finished with one you can fold it up and put it away till the next time.

TODD—They are good as far as they go. What we really want, however, is a baby that can be folded up and put away.



THE WAY TO KNOW

LITTLE BOY—Pa, how will we know when we get to Pittsburg?

FATHER—When you open your eyes and can't see anything.

THE OTHER MAN

By Frederic Taber Cooper

WITH his eyes bent somberly on the firm young shoulders of the girl in the bow of the canoe, Donald Sturges was moodily plowing his paddle through the placid water, with little of his usual clean finish of stroke. Behind them, the white sands of the beach curved, in a gleaming crescent, closely jeweled with the pearly gray of shingled cottages. Before them, the sail-flecked highway of the Sound stretched seaward, calm and translucent as a lake, save where the eternal stirring of the tide flashed back cascades of diamonds, under the morning sun of mid-August. Not a cloud marred the blueness of the sky, from zenith to horizon, where Plum and Gull and Fisher's Island, nebulous with distance, seemed to float in midair, in a luminous mirage.

Perfunctorily keeping time to the swift, even strokes of the lithe girl in front of him, Donald felt a growing resentment toward the gladness of nature, that accorded so ill with his own mood. The physical tingle of rapid motion, the fragrant saltness of the air, even the pleasure of the girl's actual nearness, were all blighted by the insistent thought that this was the last day of his vacation, the last day of his fortnight at the beach; that his confident plans for a final understanding with Kittie Garland, a definite adjustment of their lives, had shattered themselves against the caprice, elusiveness, indifference; that, instead of leaving her his promised wife, he was perforce abandoning the field to the Other Man.

Kittie, symbol of serenity in cool and spotless white, plied her paddle with a practised ease, betokening adept

mastery of the canoe. A subtle fragrance of youth and sunshine and the physical gladness of living emanated from her whole agile, graceful, dainty person, suggesting beneath the trim, tailor-made serge the play of firm young muscles, elastic with health and vitality. Donald's eyes rested hungrily upon the burnished brown of her hair, the tip of her shell-like ear, the oval curve of her cheek, tanned by wind and sun to a golden russet. But all the fleeting changes of her face, the witchery of her curved red lips, the laughter that lurked in her wide gray eyes, were squandered on the unresponsive sea and sky. From time to time, as the girl's glance involuntarily followed the dip of her noiseless blade, her companion caught fleeting glimpses of her profile, from which he vainly tried to read her mood.

Apparently no shadow of his own deep discontent now touched her. Yet he felt the hopelessness of trying to fathom one single thought passing within that small, capricious, wilfully averted head. She had come with him against her will. With tactless jealousy, he had held her to her promise, when Jack Rathburn would have claimed her for a game of golf, and she had punished him by her undisguised reluctance. Even though she had come, he was having scant joy in her. She seemed to have quite discarded him from her thoughts, to have deliberately put behind her the vital issues between them, and selfishly surrendered herself to the sensuous rhythm of the stroke, the contagious blitheness of the elements.

It was the girl's apparent unconcern,

the absence of any slightest hint of contrition, the obvious ease with which she thrust aside his hopes and fears and unsatisfied longings, that stung young Donald to a futile anger. It was time that he went back to the treadmill of the New York office, he told himself with boyish exaggeration, forgetting for once his deep-rooted pride in the sterling old banking house of which his father was the head. It was time that he went back to the dull routine of his apprenticeship, the deadening monotony of adding up columns, endless columns, of other people's dollars and cents, if the best use to which Kittie could put the last of their rare August days together was to turn her slim young back upon him in disdainful silence.

Yes, he did well to be angry, he brooded gloomily, as the accumulated grievances of a fortnight boomed up, bigger and bigger. He had come to the Beach with such glad confidence, armed with love and hope and a dainty ring, a sapphire set with diamonds. He had handed her the ring, the first evening down upon the rocks—the only evening they had been alone together—and she had let him slip it on her finger, in her first absorbed delight at its prettiness. Then she had drawn it off again, refusing to commit herself. Of course she could not keep a ring of his; how foolish of him to expect her to! To please him, she would wear it that one evening, but on condition that he should ask for nothing more—at least not at present! Perhaps in a year or two, when they were both grown up! And so, with the mockery of light laughter, she checked the hope and love, half-uttered, on his lips.

For two long weeks he had tried to be patient, recognizing that she had given him no pledge, no definite claim upon her, that though his ring was still in her possession, she did not wear it. For two weeks he had shared her, perforce, with other people, fuming inwardly at the hopelessness of all efforts to have her to himself for a single hour; feigning cheerfulness when other men and other girls broke in upon his

opportunities; swallowing his wrath when Jack Rathburn, always Jack Rathburn, bore her off from him with nonchalant ease, to the crab-pool up the cove, or to the golf-links beyond the point. But she had given her promise that this last day should be his—her definite promise, though she chose now not to remember it. Even this hour, wasted in captious silence, was a grudging concession, almost revoked at the last moment because the Other Man had followed them down to the water's edge, golf-sticks in hand, and tauntingly accused her of partiality.

By this time they had passed beyond the diving-raft, beyond the fish-nets and the outlying rocks, and were heading, arrow-straight, across the Sound. There were few days when they could have ventured out so far; and even now the buoyant uplift of the long, slow swell gave warning that it was time to turn. Yet Sturges, brooding on his wrongs, still held the course straight on. Here they were together, in the wide solitude of the open water, and the golden minutes were one by one slipping from him. Half a boat's length, a paltry space of ten feet, intervened between them; yet in spirit she was as distant, as unattainable as the impalpable blue of the sky above them.

It was symbolic, he told himself helplessly, of their present relations in life—Kittie holding the even tenor of her way, while he toiled vainly in pursuit. Strain as he would at the oar, he never could close the gap between them by a single inch; strive as he might to please her, he found himself as far from winning her as ever. He felt a great, unsatisfied longing for her. He wanted the right to gather her in and hold her close, to clasp her slim, cool fingers in his own; the right to take a dozen foolish, harmless liberties; the right, this very moment, to reach forward and touch, with awkward gentleness, those soft, fluffy little ringlets of short hair, close-curling from the warmth of her neck, which the breeze begotten by their own swift motion

blew wantonly toward him, teasing his desire. It maddened him to see her sitting there so cool and calm and self-sufficient, so unresponsive to his own imperious need of her. His muscles tingled with repressed longing to reach out and seize her with bold tenderness, and daringly kiss her into submission; to strike an answering spark of passion from her, as steel strikes an answering spark from flint.

But the vision of Rathburn's handsome, haughty face, the haunting irony of Rathburn's smile, dashed poor Donald's ardor. For aught he knew, the spark had been struck already. It was not normal for a girl so pretty, so joyous, so eminently desirable, to hold herself still fancy-free, untrammelled by the exactions of love and lovers. No, he decided dismally, Kittie's coldness sprang from no timidity, no instinctive clinging, a little longer, to her girlhood. It was the mask of an awakened heart, a heart already given to Jack Rathburn. And so, instead of trying to take the girl by storm, young Sturges yielded to the handicap of jealousy, the incubus of the Other Man, and moodily continued to plow the water.

And yet, deep down in his heart, Donald knew that he had not yet really lost faith in Kittie, and that he had no intention of giving her up. He could hardly remember a time when he had not loved her, when he had not assumed, as a matter of course, that they would some day marry. They had been thrown closely together since childhood; had grown up almost under the same roof; the two families had smiled indulgently upon the ripening boy-and-girl attachment, which fitted in so admirably with the parents' plans and ambitions. He knew, of course, that the whole weight of their influence was in his favor. From a worldly standpoint, what could be more suitable? An only son and an only daughter, destined eventually to be the sole heirs to the great banking interests of the house of Sturges & Garland; a well-matched couple, too, and pleasant to look upon; although

Donald, quite without conceit, never took stock of his own physical assets, nor realized of how much account, in Kittie's eyes, was the young virility of his well-knit figure, his length of clean-cut limb, the purposeful strength of his still rather boyish face.

His time was spent in idealizing Kittie's charms and graces, in discovering new cause for wonderment in the burnished brown of her hair, the unfathomable gray of her eyes. In spite of her girlish changefulness, he had somehow always felt so sure of her! And now, just because an older man, a man of the world, a man who had visited odd countries and written odd books, chose to look upon her with interest, and flatter her vanity by treating her like a full-grown woman, she was ready to transfer her allegiance and let the years of Donald's patient service count for nothing.

How he hated and envied and distrusted Rathburn, with his smooth manners, his assurance, his ability to say just the right thing in just the right place, his maddening knack of making him, Donald Sturges, look foolish and awkward and boyishly immature. Donald knew that he showed his jealousy and that others noticed it and were secretly amused. Rathburn, too, noticed it, but he made no secret of his amusement. Donald hated him the more for the quizzical triumph of his smile. And Kittie seemed to find a perverse joy in openly flaunting her preference for the Other Man.

Something of Donald's pent-up wrath unconsciously spent itself in a sudden vicious stroke that slung the canoe broadside onto an advancing wave, missing an overturn by the narrowest margin of good luck, and enveloping Kittie in an April shower of salt spray. The girl dashed the water from face and hair, and to his immense relief looked back at him, over her shoulder, with eyes brimming over with laughter.

"I didn't know you were so vindictive, Don! Do you always prescribe the water-cure for bad temper?"

"Never think that I did it on pur-

pose, Kittie! It's the greatest mercy that we didn't tip over!" His realization of the risk they had run, nearly a mile from shore, made it difficult to echo the girl's light inconsequence.

"The quality of your mercy is not strained," she quoted mockingly. "I'm wringing wet with gentle dew from heaven. Don't be solemn, Don. That's even worse than being sulky!"

"Glad you found it gentle!" said Donald ruefully, too contrite for the moment to resent the implied reproach. By this time the canoe was safely turned and held a homeward course, in the direction of the fish-nets and the rocks. "I don't care, it cleared the atmosphere," he added suddenly, with a new, queer lightness in his heart, for Kittie was no longer angry with him; she was once more the old-time, sunny Kittie, looking at him with a kindness in her smiling eyes that had been missing from them for two long weeks.

"I declare, Kittie," he continued irrelevantly, "the wetter your hair is the more prettily it curls!"

His gaze was once more hypnotized by the little clustering ringlets, close curling with the dampness, against the whiteness of her neck. He felt the old, rash, foolish desire welling up mightily within him. But the girl, if she heard, ignored the compliment. Instead, she suddenly began to sing one of the old, familiar, threadbare college songs they had sung a hundred times together. The joyous lilt of her fresh young voice seemed to Donald like the sparkle of sunshine made audible. A moment later he had caught the contagion of her mood, and blended his voice with hers. And there, between blue sky and bluer water, those two light-hearted, irresponsible young persons forgot the existence of the Other Man, and blithely sang in time to their paddling the classic doggerel of "U-pi-dee" and "Bingo," the hackneyed sentiment of "My Bonnie" and "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party." The words, worn dull with iteration, fell as meaninglessly on their ears as the counting-out rhymes of childhood. Their enjoyment, had they stopped to analyze it,

would have been found to lie in the rhythm, the melody, the unison of their voices. But suddenly, in the middle of a verse,

"On my lips a question trembled,
Trembled till it dared to come,"

the girl broke off with suspicious abruptness:

"We must have been out here for hours, Donald! I shall have no time to dress for luncheon. Why didn't you go back the straight way?" For, taking advantage of her absorption, he had steadily veered to the left, behind the fish-nets where the poaching seagulls circled, behind the islands where they nested. Steering deftly through a narrow channel between the rocks, he found himself at last absolutely alone with her, in the midst of a tiny sea, ringed round by a toy archipelago—a haven of refuge from prying eyes. Aquatic grasses, tide-worn stones and clustering mussel shells impeded progress; but through the glaucous clearness of the water the darting fishes flashed in and out among the varicolored mosses. Deliberately Donald ran the bow of the canoe upon a sandy shallow.

"We can't go back quite yet," he said, with new decision in his tone. "I have something to say to you first, Kittie dear."

"Now, you are going to be tiresome again!" said the girl, with a touch of weariness in her voice.

"Yes, I am going to be tiresome, if you mean that I am going to insist upon being fairly treated. We are not children, Kittie, and you sha'n't put me off any longer. I am just like that fellow in the song, dear. I came up here, two weeks ago, with a question trembling on my lips; and I have been trying, every hour of the time since then, to find a chance to ask it. And all the while you have known quite well what I wanted, though you pretended not to. And every day you have evaded me, and laughed and teased and quarreled with me—any means, good or bad, so long as it would keep me from speaking!"

"And supposing that were all true,

Donald Sturges," rejoined the girl, with sudden heat. "I don't admit that it is, for you exaggerate and twist the facts very unkindly. I have not deliberately laughed at you or tried to quarrel. But supposing I did try to keep you from saying things that I was not ready to hear? Was it generous of you, Donald, to force them on me? Couldn't you have taken a hint, couldn't you have understood, without making me put into words, that I don't want things changed, that I don't want to be bothered with love and nonsense for months and months to come?"

"I don't think you have a right to call me ungenerous," Donald answered slowly, a trifle nonplused by the girl's sudden vehemence. "Every fellow has a right to ask for a frank answer to an honest question; and if you had said all this a few days sooner it would have saved some heartache. Come, Kittie," he continued persuasively, "I don't want to bind you to anything before you are ready. I know you have never given me any definite claim. It is my own fault if I have taken too much for granted. But I have believed all along that you liked me pretty well, and in spite of the last two weeks I believe so still."

"I never said that I didn't like you, Donald," she interposed impulsively, "only—you mustn't hurry me."

"I am not going to be so foolish as to hurry you. I'll promise that you sha'n't be bothered with 'love and nonsense for months and months to come,' if you don't want to be. But can't you give me a crumb of comfort? Can't you at least wear my poor little ring, Kittie? It shall mean, between ourselves, just as little or as much as you choose to let it. But I'd take a lot of comfort in knowing that you were wearing it. I'd find it a lot easier to be patient, when other men were crowding in and monopolizing you, if I saw it sparkling on your finger, as a sort of outward symbol that I am to have first chance, when the time comes."

"And how many men, do you suppose, would crowd in and monopolize me, with the outward symbol of your

first chance sparkling on my finger?" the girl asked, with sudden scorn. "That is so like a man's selfishness. You are not half so anxious to find out whether I love you as to have me safely labeled, 'All rights reserved; no others need apply.' You grudge me my freedom, Donald. You resent a girl's natural pleasure in boating and fishing and dancing with a jolly crowd. You make mountains out of a little harmless attention and a few foolish compliments. And it really isn't any of your business, you know, Donald."

"But how can I help grudging you your freedom, when I see you steadily slipping away from me?" groaned Sturges; "how can I make anything less than mountains out of your coldness, your formality, your perverseness, that have driven me almost wild? But I haven't complained much, have I, Kittie? Though I can't agree that it wasn't any of my business. I don't see what I have done to offend you."

"What you have done, Donald? You have made me desperately uncomfortable over and over again. You admit that I never gave you the least little bit of a claim upon me, yet, ever since you came here, you have made me conspicuous with your air of proprietorship, your jealousy and glumness, your very way of looking at me when other men were talking with me. No, Donald, you didn't say much in words, but your actions spoke loud enough for the whole Beach to hear."

"Uncomfortable? Conspicuous?" retorted Donald, his sense of injustice suddenly outweighing his discretion. "It is not my fault if you have been conspicuous and uncomfortable. You have yourself and Rathburn to thank for that. For the past two weeks he has had three times as much of you as I have. If you go in swimming, who helps you out to the raft and shows you how to dive? Rathburn, and not I. If you choose, instead, to play golf, who rows you across the cove, and carries your golf-sticks? Rathburn, again, and not I. If there is a dance at the Casino who gets the pick of the waltzes? Rathburn, confound

him, always Rathburn. Thank heaven, he doesn't two-step, or he would get the pick of those, too."

"You are too absurd," said Kittie, with sudden dignity; "that is an entirely different matter. Mr. Rathburn is a much older man, quite too old for any sentimental nonsense. We are simply very good friends, with a lot of tastes in common. Of course, I can't help feeling pleased—yes, and flattered, too—to find that I think just as he does about books and lots of things. You really have no right to question my conduct at all, Donald. You surely needn't quarrel with me just because Mr. Rathburn happens to dive and golf and waltz as well as he talks!"

"Oh, yes," rejoined Donald, seemingly bent now upon self-destruction, "Rathburn does everything well, and I nothing. If that is what you mean, why don't you say it right out? He swims better than I do; he waltzes better; he talks better; he makes love better—that's the plain truth of it. The man is in love with you, Kittie, and you either can't see it or you won't. Everybody else at the Beach sees it plainly enough. It's time you were told that you were doing a great wrong to him or to me, or to both of us. The only thing that can really excuse you," concluded the rash young man, working himself up to a crushing climax, "is that you are in love with Rathburn yourself!"

There was just a perceptible pause, broken only by the soft lapping of the waves, the clamorous plaint of the circling gulls, the far off rapid-fire of a naphtha launch. Then, "I think you have left nothing further to say," the girl suggested icily. "Perhaps you will allow me to go back now?" The cold anger in her tone, as with unexpected strength she drove the canoe around through the stubborn eel-grass, effectively sobered Donald. Now that the words were spoken, he felt an impotent longing to have them safely back again, unuttered, unformulated. What a purposeless, idiotic, insolent thing to say to a girl, whether he believed it or not! And yet she had not

denied it! That was the one little, stubborn fact that struck him like a blow in the face. She knew that he was going away tonight, that he would not see her again for weeks; she knew that he was writhing under the sense of his own helplessness, the unfair advantage of the Other Man—and yet she let his charge that she loved Rathburn pass unchallenged. He had spoken from anger, not conviction; but now his hot-headed jealousy gave place to a chill fear. With compressed lips, he rowed on, in miserable silence, until within a few yards of the Beach. A gay, inconsequential group of young people—the jolly crowd that Kittie always craved—had noted their approach, and gathered at the water-line to meet them, with Rathburn conspicuously in the van.

"We can't let matters rest this way, Kittie," Donald threw back at her desperately just before they came within earshot; "you must give me another chance later."

"I am going golfing with Mr. Rathburn after luncheon," she answered him colorlessly. "You know, I put him off this morning on your account. And later, there is the clambake on the South Beach——"

"But I thought you had given that up," said Donald wretchedly. "That's a moonlight picnic, and you won't start back until after it's time for me to take the night boat for New York. I sha'n't get a word with you alone, and there are a hundred things I must say before I go."

"It is just as well," said Kittie with malice. "I'd hate to have to hear you say a hundred things, Donald. I don't like the quality of your last sample." She flung a saucy salute to the waiting group on the shore, then sent a final shot backward to poor Donald: "Don't worry about your ring, Don; I'll find time to give it back before you go."

"Curse the ring!" said Donald savagely, but apparently the girl did not hear him. She had given her undivided attention, with both her hands, to Rathburn, who was zealously aiding her to step ashore.

The dragging luncheon hour was but a prelude to an interminable afternoon. Self-banished to his bedroom, Donald stormily packed and unpacked his dressing-case a dozen separate times, futilely trying to convince himself that he had no intention of going to the clambake, that he would not even try to see Kittie again, that he really meant to take an early train for New York, instead of waiting for the night boat. Yet his heart's desire drew him like a lodestar. And when evening came he found himself, with self-contempt rather than surprise, a reluctant member of the usual jolly crowd, helping to transport across the cove and down to the South Beach the baskets and hampers, the steaming chowder and the well-iced melons, the ears of corn for roasting, the barrels and driftwood for the fire. Pride forced an outward semblance of content, but inwardly he nursed a Byronic gloom. Kittie at times sat near him, so near that their fingers touched in the simple courtesy of passing plates. Yet not once did he address himself directly to her, or she to him.

But when chowder and corn and melons were consumed the party broke into groups, some to pile the remaining barrels on the fire, and watch the leaping flames; some to wander down the beach and gaze across the silvered waters at the full round disk of the moon, sluggishly lifting itself from behind a low-lying bank of clouds. Kittie and Rathburn had slipped away. Donald thought that he saw two dim figures melting into the shadow, behind the further point of rocks. Despair suddenly gripped him, and without waiting to bid good-bye to the others he took his leave under cover of the night, choosing deliberately the long, three-mile walk around by the red bridge rather than attract notice by rowing across the cove.

He strode tempestuously across the salt meadows, finding a grim satisfaction in being alone, after the feigned jollity of the past two hours. He was free now to think lucidly, to wrestle with his problem, to school himself

to be a graceful loser. For he was convinced now that he had lost, irretrievably. Kittie had not denied his charge—that one little stubborn fact had haunted him throughout the afternoon and evening. His doubt had gathered strength, had grown into conviction, irrefutable, overwhelming. Yes, he knew now that Kittie loved Rathburn; he marveled at his own blindness in not knowing it sooner. Kittie loved Rathburn, a man of slender means, a man almost old enough to be her father, a man whom her family would look upon with scant favor. This thought, instead of bringing comfort, added to Donald's trouble. He had hated Rathburn with the unreasoning hatred one gives to any obstacle against which one stumbles. He knew nothing to the man's discredit. Rathburn might be the prince of good fellows, for any evidence he had to the contrary. At all events, decided poor Donald with a mighty effort, Kittie had all her life had exactly what she wanted; and now if she wanted Rathburn, why Rathburn she should have, if he could aid and abet it. The spectacle of Kittie's misery was the one thing that he felt he could not bear. It was already bad enough to be miserable himself.

Reaching the Garland cottage, after an hour's walk, he met Rathburn descending the steps, suit-case in hand; and even in the deceptive moonlight it seemed to Donald that his face showed curiously strained and aged. His manner, too, was distinctly odd; he murmured something incoherent about the night boat to New York and a telegram from his publishers; he pressed Donald's hand with a warmth of feeling little warranted by their recent strained relations; and though obviously in haste, he lingered as though trying to force out words that refused to come. Finally he strode rapidly away, then with a visible effort checked himself and called back over his shoulder: "Don't go without seeing Miss Garland, Sturges! She has gone up the boardwalk to meet you!"

Tingling with a vague dread, Donald turned back in the direction of the

boardwalk, which followed the curve of the main beach in a giant horseshoe. In coming, he had taken the middle road, behind the cottages, and so had missed her. But where was she? The boardwalk stretched before him, with an uninterrupted view, a full half-mile, unbroken by a shadow. From cottage windows and piazzas came the murmur of voices and laughter, a snatch of rag-time, a tinkle of a mandolin. On the walk a group of men stood smoking, but not a woman was in sight. He had passed the last of the cottages, the public baths, the pavilion, before he found her, a disconsolate little figure in white, drooping upon the rocks, the selfsame rocks where they had spent the first evening of his visit. Here at last, with all her barriers down, Kittie had capitulated to penitence and loneliness.

"Kittie, what is the matter?" Donald asked her, with keen concern, but already he had leaped to a conclusion. The other man's brusque departure, the girl's palpable misery, seemed to yield but one explanation. "Can't you tell me what the trouble is, Kittie? What has hurt you so, dear? Forgive me, if I am clumsy, but is it—is it Rathburn?"

Still she did not speak, but the bowed head, buried on her arm, nodded slightly, the burnished brown of her hair glinting in the moonlight as she moved. In his distress Donald laid a fraternal arm across the girl's shoulders. "I understand, it is because Rathburn has gone away. You didn't want him to go, Kittie? There has been some mistake? You quarreled about me, didn't you? I'll swear he loves you, dear, though you wouldn't believe me when I said so before. Why, he simply couldn't help it, Kittie. I'll go after him and explain. I'll tell him that you don't care for me and never did. I'll bring him back again, if I have to drag him!"

The girl suddenly sat bolt upright, with a hysterical little laugh, and looked at him frankly, with unshed tears glistening in her wide gray eyes. "You don't understand one little bit, you good, kind, foolish boy," she said

unsteadily. "He won't come back; I don't want him to; I wouldn't see him if he did! Can't you understand, Donald, without making me put it into words, how blind and silly and cruel I have been? Can't you understand that you were right and I was wrong, and that poor Mr. Rathburn was in deadly earnest all the time, and I just a vain, horrid little flirt, as you said I was this morning?"

"I never, never called you that, Kittie!" was the nearest approach to an intelligent remark that Donald, in his bewilderment, could utter.

"Well, you should have, if you didn't, for I deserved it. Oh, Don, I feel so mean and contemptible to be telling you all this. It seems like betraying a confidence. Yet I couldn't be happy till you knew. I never once dreamed what he meant, when he began, and then I couldn't stop him. You were right about another thing, too, Donald—he certainly does know how to make love well, a great deal better than you do, you foolish boy," she added, with a glint of the old mischief in her voice. "I tried to stop him, I tried not to listen, I tried to tell him it was no use; and instead I sat there, tongue-tied, while he pictured, oh, so clearly, just what it means to a man when he really loves a girl very, very much, and what a dangerous power a girl has to make or mar a man's whole life. He little guessed that, all the while, he was just helping me to understand how badly I have been treating you. I really think," concluded the girl soberly, "that Mr. Rathburn would have won any woman who had a grain of love in her heart to give him; I almost think he would have won me if I hadn't already given every bit of it to someone else."

Wonderingly, incredulously, Donald took the hand that she yielded as she turned toward him in impulsive surrender. There, on her finger, the slumberous sapphire gleamed fitfully in the moonlight, amid its tiny satellites of brilliants.

"I don't dare to understand you," said Donald, fearful that he was the

victim of a waking dream. "Oh, Kittie!—and it was only this morning that you were so angry with me, when I called it a symbol of my first chance!"

"But it isn't that at all," said the girl shyly; "it's a token that your chance has come and that you have taken it—if you still care to, Donald?"

And suddenly Donald woke to a knowledge that his hour of victory had come; that he had the right to clasp her cool, slim fingers, to draw her to him; the right to satisfy the foolish, fond desire of his heart, and touch with awkward gentleness those soft, clinging little ringlets of short hair, close-curling from the fragrant warmth of her neck.

At length a steady, ponderous churning, dulled by distance, but drawing each moment nearer, aroused them from the absorption of youth and happiness. The big night steamer for New York swung majestically into view, around the lighthouse point, cutting a broad flare of incandescence against the wan background of the water.

"Don, you have missed your boat! Whatever will you do?" asked the girl, with real concern.

"Oh, I don't care," returned Don, with glad inconsequence. "I wouldn't have hurried tonight for a hundred boats. I can catch a night local, or a freight or a milk train, and get to the office somehow by morning. I suppose old Rathburn is on the boat," he added soberly. "Good old Rathburn, he brought us together at last."

"Poor Mr. Rathburn," said Kittie tremulously. "You may have forgiven me, Donald, but I can't quite forgive myself."

"Oh, don't worry about him," returned Donald, with the easy assurance of success. "Rathburn will be all right. He may have known how to make love better than I do. But he couldn't ever have really loved you half so well."

And so, with the egotism of young love, he cast from him the burden of the Other Man. And he failed to notice that, while Kittie yielded him her lips, her eyes still followed the waning light of the Sound steamer, until it passed out of sight. He had not yet learned that to a woman's heart there is a lingering fragrance in the incense of love, even when he who offers it happens to be the Other Man.



THE UNFORTUNATES

By Aloysius Coll

THE winds that cannot hear the harps they play
Are deaf Beethovens of the solitude;
The flowers that make us happy all the day
These are the sightless Miltons of the wood!



UNDERESTIMATED

MRS. ROCKSEY—The doctor said it might be a good thing if I took the girls to the country for a change.

ROCKSEY—Why, didn't he know we were rich enough to go to Florida?

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

By May Harris

"In little gown and shoe . . ."

THE fragment of the line drifted into Sharp's mind as he sat in his new loneliness opposite an empty chair.

People had been very kind, and there had been endless suggestions: that he go away, visit friends, travel—anything but remain in the grief-charged stillness of his own home.

At the funeral everyone had noticed his absent, tired look—not so much the look of a person spent with sorrow as of one utterly removed in spirit and hardly conscious of what went on about him. The flowers, the music, the processional grief and solemnity, had only made his apathy greater; but now, *now*, he was awake in his loneliness, and the silence about him was stung by a thousand memories of her. He seemed listening to the echo of her voice, her laughter, her light footstep pausing beside him.

"In little gown and shoe . . ."

She had been so much like a child; a child whose wayward, dainty sweetness had perhaps seemed at first to others an ill match to his gravity, his cynical detachment.

But he had nothing to reproach himself with; she had known altogether *how* perfectly he had loved her. From the first she had been more to him than anything—more than his work, to which he had used to give himself so utterly; more than his books. . . .

More than his books! The thought was puerile. He could turn away from their mute presences on tables and shelves with no hope for pleasure in future communion with them. The manuscript piled on his desk was a

bond he could no longer acknowledge. The things that had meant so much—his life-work, his very heart's blood as he had felt them once—now how he would give them all, a million times over, to have her back!

Other people had their griefs. So many had come to him in the past two or three days and declared their fellowship in this hard way; but always he had the feeling—the egoism of grief—"They think they've known! But their loss was not like mine. Nothing was ever so perfect as the life I knew."

And to have lost it all! He got up and paced the room with his hands clasped behind him. His study, though it was sacred to his old gods of worship, still kept to his feeling the sanctity of her presence. How gay a presence it had been! As of a too happy child, perplexed with playthings, restless and never still with happiness.

It had seemed in the beginning wonderful that she should care for him—he had always felt there was so little in him to please a woman. He recalled their hurried marriage—when her father's sudden death had left her alone in the world—the early months of their life together, his love steadily deepening. She hadn't been simply a part of his life—he might in time be able to bear it if that had been all. But she had been the spirit of it, the inner jewel of fire and dew without which there could be no rhythmic movement, no weaving of life's threads.

Her father had been an actor, and Sharp's marriage had provoked opposition from his sisters. They said they had hoped great things of him, and to

their bitter foretelling his marriage had canceled all their expectation.

It was the Summer after his great first book had been published, and its great success had ministered to the satisfaction of his relatives and his own weariness. He went away from it all to a little place in a wilderness of country hills where he had boarded once before. He hoped to find it free of guests, for the Summer was nearly over.

There were only two: The broken-down actor with his incurable heart trouble and his young daughter. Six weeks later he had married the daughter and his life had bloomed into an increasing miracle of happiness. The thirty-four years he had lived without her seemed by comparison an empty preparation for the joy of living.

His book! How valueless its hard, brilliant philosophy, its biting wit, its skepticism.

"You've written nothing since you married," one of his sisters had reproached him a little time before. "Can you forget the praise the whole world gave you?—that you do nothing to deserve it!"

"The praise was ill-judged," he had assured her. "I shall never write again until I can better deserve it."

Once or twice, he remembered, Marie had asked him why he did not write, and he had told her he was too happy.

"If I had to write for our daily bread, I suppose it would be different," he had told her. "I'm ashamed of that other book—of the disillusion and pessimism I foisted on the world. It was a transcript of myself before I knew you. Now I shall wait until I'm worthy to transcribe what you've taught me."

"What is that?" she had asked, and he remembered how her hands had ruffled his hair as she stood behind him.

"The beauty of life!" he had answered, and he knew the sincerity of his voice had reached her below the playfulness, for she had been silent for a little, and when he had turned

to look at her he had surprised a wistful sadness like a shadow on her face. She had remained that—"the beauty of life"—to him, and to recognize that the window through which love had come, "In little gown and shoe," was closed forever, left him to stumble in a darkness that benumbed his soul.

There were pictures of her—and he stopped in his restless walking to search for them. A face like a child's; vivacious with the joy of life, sparkling with youth and gaiety. He looked and looked, sparing himself nothing, and the futility, the sense of loss engulfed him like a flood.

Two or three days later he had to write a telegram to one of his sisters in refusal of her offer to come to him if he would not go to them. His desk had been closed ever since his wife's death, and when he opened it to find the telegraph blanks his eyes fell on a letter addressed to himself by his wife.

For a moment he stared in a still suspension, and then his fingers closed with wonder on his message from the dead. He pressed it to his cheek, remembering suddenly that it was the first letter she had ever written him. Who was it who said "Letters are the truest reflection of one's individuality"? He was thankful for this one memorial she had left him.

He had understood her knowledge those last few days, that she could not get well, but she had said nothing. She could not break his heart by speaking of the terrible bar that was pushing its way between them. It had been covered over, even in those last hours, by her bright courage—a courage that had never seemed to him, as to his sisters, the irresponsibility that shifts the reckoning.

He had a surge of anger as he recalled the distrust, the distance, his sisters had maintained in their relations with his wife. They had never understood nor appreciated her.

He opened the letter:

Both of us know now that it isn't something to be patched up; it's like poor papa. I got the doctor to tell me yesterday. I can't talk to you about it, for

I know it hurts you, and I can't say the things I am going to write, for I know they would hurt you more. But they have to be said—I can't die, as I have lived, deceiving you. It would be too wicked. Your sister said once that you might have been a great man, but you'd stopped to listen to the sirens. She was right. You can be great if you are free. It's because I know you will think of me the same after I am dead—that I'll be first to you even then—that I write this letter. If I had loved you . . .

The letter blurred to Sharp's gaze. He put his hand to his eyes; he could not understand. "If I had loved you!"

When he could see the words again he read them very slowly, absorbing their meaning with a painful effort.

If I had loved you, that is the way I would have wished you to feel; that you'd think of me as only just a little more on the way before you—sometimes to be reached and loved again. But as it is, I can't bear to think that I have not only wasted two years of your life—taken it from the world, from yourself—but that I'll spoil the rest as well. That I can't do! It is hard to tell you these things, for I know what it is you have given me—I know, because I've given the same thing myself to someone else.

I want you to put me out of your life, out of your mind, just as if I had never existed. All the sham, all the pretense, of my life with you is something for you to forget. To forgive it would be impossible. I kept it up, just as my father would have kept up a character on the stage. I had to be careful, and it was hard; but I meant you should never know, should never doubt me. But when one knows one is dying everything changes. I know I ought not to leave you tricked by my deceit—thinking of—regretting me—as the woman who loved you. I loved—that other man, who never knew it, never cared for me—and I love him now.

It was a love that has hurt like a dreadful pain you can't get rid of—and I had to seem happy always.

He wasn't anything good or great—indeed, I know he wasn't good by any of the standards. He was an actor, and my father was very kind to him when he was young and unknown—and so my father's daughter fell in love with him. I can't blame him in the least. He was always bright and kind, but, as I told you, he didn't love me. . . .

When he married everything seemed to stop—so I suppose I must have hoped he'd some day come to care for me. Then you came, and my father died. I can't justify it, but at least when I'm dead you shall know me for what I am. You must not waste your fine, strong mind, your loyal devotion on the memory of a woman who never loved you. For it isn't merely hysterical imagining—I've loved him all my life—ever since I

first saw him, when he was a big boy and I a little girl. Oh, it isn't just a little thing! You mustn't think that! It's just my life—and you see I'm true to it as I couldn't be to you.

It was very wicked for me to deceive you—perhaps some people might think it more wicked to deceive you—but it's so close to the end, and we see, then, face to face! You will forget about me and go back to your writing—to making beautiful books. You have done nothing since I came into your life. I took you away from the work you had to do, but you will go back—and it won't make your work bitter or hard—less noble than you are. If I thought that, I couldn't tell you now.

To marry me was like an eagle mating with a wren. Your flight is high; you can see so far, can understand so well, that I think you won't blame me—that you'll even be a little sorry, for I have been very unhappy, and at the last, I've been honest.

Twilight found Sharp still in the chair at his desk, with strange processes of thought marshaling continually in his mind. He seemed fighting himself—the old self that had once been supreme and dominant; this self that had written a famous book, that had stood aloof on the highways of life, and studied people through a microscope, as a scientist does beetles. The sufficient materialist scoffing at people's burdens of love and grief and foibles could again shelter his broken flight into other ways. He had doubted, and then after all he had believed. The belief that had been of such an exquisite sweetness—now such unendurable pain!—had been the price he had paid—for what?

He asked himself the question while the slow stars flashed into their places above the trees and the night brought its cadenced calling of birds and insects from the garden.

It seemed to him that it had all been a useless expenditure—the love he had given; the love that had changed his whole life, his whole point of view. He was free to go back, with a real and bitter knowledge, to his old cynical attitude of aloofness. He had been tricked into happiness, trust and belief; and now rudely cast adrift, what more natural than a return to the old moorings?

He had a bitter sense of the full, the

complete surrender he had made to higher and more beautiful things as he had imagined them in his wife. And it was this embodiment of the spirit he was called upon to give burial to. As he had put away her body with the symbols of faith and grief, the obligation came now to give up without reservation the more intangible and dearer blessing. She had not loved him; he held the letter telling him so in his hand. She asked him to forget.

He had refused lights—service of any kind; and sat on in the darkness lit through the window by the high mystery of the stars.

His heart ached in its dreary regret, its dreadful consciousness of the immensity of his loss. But as the night wore on—solemn in its still silence as the empty hush of a cathedral where one person stands alone—there came to be no bitterness in his thoughts of her. Her long disguise flamed by some method of reasoning whose source he did not analyze, into the

seeming of the priestess of an altar to which he had brought his gifts. Through her, after all, "music and white light" had fallen into his life, and in return his old materialisms had shriveled and disappeared.

He understood, as he faced himself in this black hour. What had been, had been. Nothing could take it away. The old barren way—the detachment of his earlier egoism was no longer possible.

"In little gown and shoe"

No, the window in his life could never be closed. "Airs and echoes from its perplexed music" must always haunt him. Strangely, too, pity for the brave little figure painfully pretending a happiness she had never felt rose stronger than his own sense of loss. He had reached to the higher thing in his own giving, and even if the attainment had been impossible, the virtue of the quest remained and touched his scars with healing.



THE LAST POEM

By Florence Wilkinson

HIS faint hands fluttered the half-written sheet.
 What were the thoughts that came?
 His eyes burned with the light of them,
 An inner, quenchless flame.

The last song of the poet's brain
 No human eye may trace,
 But in the hour that he lay dead
 It glorified his face



GOOD THINGS

SMERE—The majority of the rich people who patronize us artists don't know anything about art.
MERRITT—My boy, it's a lucky thing for you that they don't.

A NAVY COURTSHIP

By Louise Wintzer

LIEUTENANT HENRY HAR-
VARD FOLLANSBEE TO
MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS
U. S. S. Oklahoma.

My dear Mrs. Clews:

When we left port this morning I swept the shore with my glasses thinking I might perhaps catch a glimpse of you and yours, but I was disappointed. Tonight we are steaming North, and glancing through the port I can see the same stars, the same shimmering sea, the same slim, young moon, but oh, within these few hours what changes have occurred! You have been awfully good, and there isn't a man from the captain to Jimmie Sanderson who doesn't bless the day we anchored off P— when you happened to be Summering there. What jolly times we've had together! If we'd stayed on a few days longer we would have been in a frame of mind to commit piracy, and carry some of you off.

I caught Jimmie winking and swallowing hard, and if he were not a man, I should have suspected he was on the point of blubbing. He took me aside and asked my advice. Seriously, did I think Miss Wright had been fooling him, or did girls ever wait for a man to get up from midship to ensign? He couldn't propose now, he couldn't, in decency, even give her a hint of his feelings—you know the sort of talk a boy indulges in when he's hard hit. I've been through it, and this morning I was particularly sympathetic; perhaps I was thinking could a man ask a girl to wait till he got his extra half stripe, and the additional pay of a lieutenant commander?

Well, I cheered Jimmie up. There's

no accounting for tastes, is there? Little Miss Wright is as thin as a rail and has light eyelashes, and Jimmie is one of the handsomest boys in the service.

By the way, have you known Miss Eldred long? I did not have much chance to talk to her, and she seemed so quiet I fear she did not enjoy herself. The rest of you had been chumming with us for over a week, but she was a stranger, and I hope we didn't impress her as a lot of blooming idiots. There is really no reason why I should hope to hear from you, but care of the Postmaster, New York City, will always reach me, and letters are a god-send to a man at sea.

Remember me to all your girls, and thanking you once more for your kindness to a castaway, I remain,

Very truly yours,

HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE.

AUGUST 1, 1906.

MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS TO LIEU-
TENANT HENRY HARVARD FOL-
LANSBEE

RESTAWHILE, P—.

My dear Mr. Follansbee:

Of course you did not expect me to answer your letter, but I am good, and to think of you drifting about on the great, cruel sea, and casting longing eyes toward the land that harbors a few girls, makes me tender. Memories of our days together are very pleasant, so don't thank me for my share in our parties; in pleasing you I was pleasing myself. Fortunately I know the elastic qualities of that volatile organ, the human heart, and I lay up nothing against any man.

So Jimmie boy is really smitten! May has been very quiet since you left, but she is a mouse, and whether she misses him or not I cannot say at this juncture. Girls do wait for men; that is a matter of history. Sometimes they wait and the man forgets, so I think we won't encourage your midshipman and my niece. If he is really serious the Atlantic coast is long, but not interminable, and there is a very good mail service, I believe, in America; then, too, the *Oklahoma* is bound to be at the Navy Yard some time this Winter, and May lives within telephone distance.

We did act like children, that last night. I do hope Captain Trenton was not annoyed at our pranks. Alida Eldred is, I might say, a sort of relative. I am a Southerner, though I'm sure you never would suspect it from my accent, so I'll tell you that her half-brother married my aunt's step-daughter, and when Alida was left an orphan Aunt Fan brought her home, and as Aunt Fan is an invalid Alida spends a good deal of time with me. She is a dear girl, but she has independent ideas, and Aunt Fan is old-fashioned.

I doubt whether Alida will ever be very happy. She is too big for her circle, she is capable of more than the ordinary girl, and she is very rich and has no excuse for mingling with the workaday world, which under other circumstances would provide an outlet for her unusual ability.

I scarcely know why I write you at this length about her, but you and I became great chums, and there are days when Alida is beyond me. If she would only fall in love in a rational way, it would be the making of her. To tell the truth, I brought her along that last night, hoping she and Jimmie boy might take a fancy to each other—he is so good-looking, and she is wealthy enough to afford a naval officer; most of us are not. May, for instance, is one of a large family, which lives systematically up to its last penny, but you see how the Fates work against a matchmaker! Jimmie

and May had eyes only for each other, and when Alida was not talking to you she was with Captain Trenton.

I am planning to go to Old Point after Thanksgiving. Is there any chance of the *Oklahoma* being there?

With kind regards to you all, in which my girls, as you phrase them, join, believe me,

Ever sincerely yours,

CATHLEEN CLEWS.

AUGUST 14TH, 1906.

LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE TO MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS

U. S. S. *Oklahoma*.

My dear Mrs. Clews:

You are more than good—you are an angel, and I wish you could really know how much I appreciated your answering so promptly. Men in the service are constantly meeting new people, but here and there we run across one woman to whom we open our hearts. We are accused of being fickle, but in reality when we make our choice we are more liable to be faithful to the girl than men who have had less opportunities for seeing all sorts and conditions. Then, we get so much of our own sex on board ship that when we go ashore we cultivate women exclusively, and that has helped to give us our reputation.

Last year we were hanging around San Domingo with orders to nip an incipient revolution in the bud. We stayed there eight months, with scarcely any shore leave, and when we did get ashore all we saw were natives, whose color barred them from consideration. Then when we feared the Navy Department had forgotten all about us we were ordered North. You can imagine how we stared open-mouthed at the women when we were turned loose on Broadway. The American girl for me every time!

By the way, talking of revolutions and things, it looks as if the trouble in Cuba might amount to something. If they send any ships there, we will probably be among the first to go, as our class is used for scouting. You

were in Havana last Winter, weren't you? What kind of a place is it? Of course, you don't think of returning, but how jolly it would be if we met under tropical skies, with a setting of palms and orange-trees and so forth.

You draw a very attractive picture of Miss Eldred. I knew at once she was something out of the ordinary. Nature does not waste her gifts, and those wonderful gray eyes were not given merely to see through. And then her voice! I've read of liquid voices in novels and thought it rot, but hers reminds me of purling streams, and the simplest thing she says becomes rich, with the memory of that voice ringing in your ears.

Jimmie has hit upon the happy idea of sending Miss Wright picture postals which he takes and develops himself. Today he got a characteristic snapshot of the goat putting the finishing touches to a colored Sunday supplement, so I presume it will find its way into your midst shortly. Unfortunately, I got in the line of vision, so that the vanishing back which spoils the whole thing, according to Jimmie, is mine.

Do write and say you'll be at Oyster Bay next Monday, and if you can bring Miss Wright and Miss Eldred, we'll do our best to give you a good time.

Very sincerely yours,

HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE.

AUGUST 30TH.

TELEGRAM FROM MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS
TO LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD
FOLLANSBEE

Will be down Monday morning about
ten. A. W., Alida, May and
CATHLEEN CLEWS.

LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD FOLLANS-
BEE TO MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS

U. S. S. *Oklahoma*.

Dear Mrs. Clews:

Our glorious day is a thing of the past, but its memory—Honest, do you know, Spellman told me it rained pitchforks. Did it? I thought

the sun shone. It did for me, and how smoothly things ran! Wasn't it bully of the captain to insist upon our lunching with him? And it shows he's all to the good when he included Jimmie. He has a weather eye open for that sort of thing, has our skipper.

Weren't you glad you came, after all, and wasn't it worth while? I tell you, as a navy we are getting there fast. One of the visiting attachés told a friend of mine that it was an eye-opener for foreigners to see a display of over forty first-class ships available for any kind of duty. It's a good thing for the service that we have a strenuous President. We are not losing any sleep worrying over our future.

I don't believe I realized exactly what you meant by saying Miss Eldred was rich until you interpreted those mysterious letters in your telegram, A. W., into Auto Willing, and that it was her auto which brought you down to Oyster Bay. I'd better get back to earth, hadn't I? Nevertheless, nothing can rob me of that perfect day, and some forty years hence when I'm a red-faced admiral, I'll look back and be tender of my memories. She's certainly the loveliest girl I've ever met. I don't dare tell her that. Will you do it for me?

Always yours devotedly,

HARRY FOLLANSBEE.

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1906.

MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS, TO LIEUTENANT
HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE

Dear Harry Follansbee:

Mine devotedly—out upon you for a hypocrite! Do your own love-making! Is it possible for six-feet-two to be a coward? As for Alida's money, she thinks as little of it as you should. Lack of it often causes misery; possession of it should ensure the oil of smoothness with which to run the domestic machinery. I know; I've tried both ways.

The captain is a dear. Did I ever tell you I knew him years ago? He was at Bar Harbor the Summer after I left school, and he gave me my first cap ribbon. I think I still have it

among the souvenirs of sixteen to twenty. I stopped collecting at twenty—I married.

I did more than give Alida your message; I read her the whole letter. She made no comment, but when I told her today I was writing to you she asked to be remembered.

If the United States interferes in Cuban affairs, I suppose the ships will be rushed there immediately. Havana struck me as being too gay, too frothy, with undertints of Paris. I presume it will take the downfall of the existing government hard. Having been there, I am vastly interested. I met one or two of those at present in the public eye, and fortunately men on both sides, so that I follow the details in the papers assiduously.

If you do go to Cuba you can send Alida picture postals of the Malecon and Morro. Jimmie boy will no doubt put the situation vividly before us; his snap-shots are excellent. It is eleven, and I am yawning. Good night.

Yours cordially,
CATHLEEN CLEWS.

SEPTEMBER SEVENTH.

LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE TO MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS

U. S. S. *Oklahoma*.

Friday night.

Dear Mrs. Clews:

I am writing you tonight, though it is doubtful when I will be able to post this. We are steaming as fast as we can toward Cuba, and expect to arrive tomorrow morning.

I must tell you of our orders. We were sailing leisurely South, planning to put in a few days at League Island for necessary repairs, before resuming our patrol of San Domingan waters, when we received a wireless to proceed at once to Havana. Were we delighted at the chance of a real scrap! We have only a hundred and twenty-five sailors on board, but there was a grin of contentment on each face, and we fell to work on the landing drill without delay. Off Norfolk we got another wireless, countermanding the

first order, and telling us to put in at Key West to await developments.

We were a sore lot that night. Even the skipper showed his disgust. He was in the Santiago campaign, and he has no great love for the natives. We cursed good and plenty, and when Peyton started playing solitaire in the wardroom the rest of us sat around eagerly watching for a chance to catch him cheating, so that we could have some excuse for quarreling.

This morning we were off the Florida coast, when the wireless began sizzling again, and we felt like cheering when we got that message. It read: "What speed are you making?" We answered: "Fourteen knots." . . . "Is that the best you can do?" . . . "No, we can make eighteen, but it uses a tremendous lot of coal." . . . And then that bully order, "Burn all the coal you need, but get to Havana as fast as you can!"

I tell you, we haven't rested a moment since. God knows what we will find there; Cuban revolutions may be of a different brand from the usual Spanish-American tempests in teapots. I wonder if our guns will have to be trained on the city; I wonder if the harbor is mined; I wonder—a thousand things, and then my thoughts soften and I wonder what you two are doing, and if I will ever see Her again. She is so sweet, and yet so unapproachable, that though I had it on the tip of my tongue all that blessed day to ask permission to write, the words stuck in my throat. I am a coward. When she gazed at me with those glorious eyes that seem to bore down deep in a fellow's soul I felt small and mean, and everything I'd ever done to be ashamed of kept cropping up, till I was disgusted and thought I was a nice sort of chap to be falling in love with a girl like that. I knew how it would be the first moment I laid eyes on her; I may never get the chance to tell her, but tonight, when there are possibilities and uncertainties on every hand, I want to write it once. I love her, I love you, Alida! . . . There, it's out now and I feel better. God

bless you both, dear American women! I feel tender toward my native land tonight—it harbors the girl I love. I sha'n't close this; I shall add a few lines after we arrive.

Monday. We are anchored snugly in the harbor, one of three American ships, and our preparations for war seem absurd in the light of after events. Both sides want us here. The Government is not so frank, but the Insurrectos love us like brothers, and treat us like *intimos amigos*. Havana ought to be a bully little place in the season. Peyton and I went ashore yesterday, and drove up and down the Prado and along the Malecon, and saw some of the Cuban beauties, but my thoughts were some place else, and they had no attraction for me. I wish Jai Alai were running. They say that is the finest sport ever. We dined at the Miramar, but I needn't describe that to you; only, if I add that we tried some Moorish crabs you'll know we dined off the fat of the land.

The *Des Moines* sailed this morning to bring the peace committee over from Tampa. I think after they establish peace they will need some strong man to sit on the lid and keep it down. The boy is going ashore with the mail; I'll write you again in a few days. I won't send you general news—you'll read that in the papers, but I'll keep you posted as to what the *Oklahoma* and her officers are doing. I said all I dared the other night. There's nothing left but to sign myself,

Yours devotedly,

HARRY.

LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE TO MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS

Dear Mrs. Clews:

The jig is up, but the Cubans take it in a funny way. They seem to argue that as long as they keep their flag up on the Morro and the public buildings, and preserve the letter of their independence, the spirit doesn't count. I was ashore for an hour this morning. I had some cables to get off, and I used my eyes a bit. There was nothing unusual about the appearance of the

streets. I saw women shopping, driving, men attending to business; even the small boy did not give vent to howls of derision at the farce enacted these last few days. In my bones I feel something must be back of it; they can't let us assume the reins of government without one protest. We make a fine showing in the harbor. The *Louisiana* is certainly a real ship.

A girl down here sent some flowers to the captain the other day, and addressed her note in this fashion: "Captain Couden, U. S. S. *Louisiana*, Queen of the American Navy."

We are going to have some boat races, and perhaps a boxing bout to amuse the men. The other fellows are crazy for a dance, but Jimmie and I don't take much stock in that. Of course, I didn't expect to hear from you, but you've had time to write, and you ought to have worried some over the fate of

Yours devotedly,

HARRY.

SEPTEMBER 29.

P. S.—Just got your letter. Am writing to Her. I thank you with all my heart.

MRS. CATHLEEN CLEWS TO LIEUTENANT HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE

Dear Harry:

I can't be formal any longer. Your letter, posted after you reached Cuba, arrived last night. Alida is with Aunt Fan, so, although it was raining this morning, there was nothing for me to do but to take the first train out to Ferncliff. Alida had been reading the papers, and she turned pale when she saw me. I think she feared bad news. I was wet and cross. I came up from the station in an open fly, so I just put the letter in her hands and went upstairs to change my things. Before I was ready to go in and see Aunt Fan, Alida knocked at the door.

"Do you think he means it?" she asked. I remembered when a young officer made love to me and my people told me navy men never meant what they said, that I sent him away, and regretted it, for I've since found out

that he did mean it, every word, so I answered Alida truthfully. "Then why doesn't he write to me!" she said; and why don't you?

Cordially yours,

CATHLEEN.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH.

WIRELESS MESSAGE FROM LIEUTENANT
HENRY HARVARD FOLLANSBEE TO
MISS ALIDA ELDRED

HAVANA, SEPTEMBER 29.

Letter mailed today. What answer?

WIRELESS MESSAGE FROM MISS ALIDA
ELDRED TO LIEUTENANT HENRY
HARVARD FOLLANSBEE

FERNCLIFF, OCTOBER 4.

Favorable.



THE MYSTERY

"I have been here before."—ROSSETTI.

By Lizette Woodworth Reese

AS up and down the world I go,
All ancient do the places show;
The gardens full of honeybees,
The roofs, the high and windy trees.

April begins. The gnarled pear
Out in the lane buds white and fair;
Long since—for I can see it plain—
It blossomed in just such a lane.

This sunset light upon the glass,
Long since I saw across the grass;
Perhaps in Rouen, perhaps in Rome;
Where'er, I know that it was home.

The very thought of this is sweet;
What though the memory be fleet!
The sound, the odor but a snatch?
It is the clicking of the latch.



THOSE DEAR GIRLS

MADGE—How do you know she wears a No. 2 shoe?
MARJORIE—Hasn't she a No. 3 foot?

THREE GAMESTERS

By Edith Rogers

A MAN and a woman sat playing poker together. The room was the world, and its vaulted roof was heaven's, and its floor was that which is said to be paved with good intentions.

The table upon which they played was made of wood from the Tree of Knowledge, but it was veneered—like all that we have about us—with that human handiwork termed Civilization.

The man's chair was curiously carved out of one solid block of Selfishness, and the woman's was weak and so much and badly patched that few could have told of what it had originally been constructed; yet a connoisseur would have said readily enough, "Of Endurance."

The man had once been handsome and had a deep line across his brow; the woman had once been beautiful and had most piteous eyes. They did not look at each other, but at their cards, or, when not at their cards, at the jack-pot, which lay, not upon the table flat, but concealed in a locked box—a box with a round hole in its cover. It had been increasing through many long years, both the man and the woman contributing richly upon all those occasions when Chance tied their game even.

Now they were ready. The man considered his cards, the woman considered hers; then his hand moved over the table, and as an ante he pushed forward a year of his life. The woman pushed forward a year of hers. Then he said shortly:

"Well, what do you bet?"

She replied gently, "The last of my

youth," and added it to the rest as she spoke.

"I will see you," he said slowly, "with my debts. They are worth a king's ransom, believe me; and I will raise you with my accursed habits." He laughed shortly as his hand moved back.

Tears came into the woman's eyes.

"I see you with hope," she said—gently, as before—"and I raise you"—she hesitated; then, firmly—"with devotion."

He laughed again.

"I see you with disinheritance," he said, "and I raise you with dishonor."

She shrank a little at the word, but her speech was quite steady. "I see you with love, and I raise you with infinite love."

He bit his lip. "I see you with impatience," he said sharply, not to say harshly, "and I raise you with coldness and cruelty."

The woman paused and there was a minute of utter hush in the room; then she drew a long breath.

"I see you with my present," she told him; "I raise you with my future."

At that he threw up his head and looked at her. "I see you with determination," he said distinctly, "and I raise you with desertion and despair."

She lifted her eyes to his, and a strangely wild and indeterminate look passed between them.

Just then a door at the side of them was flung open and a young girl walked in upon the tragedy with that carelessness which generally characterizes the entrance of Inexperience among the red-hot plowshares of Life's lessons.

"Oh, playing cards!" she exclaimed. "What fun! Do give me a hand."

Without one word the man withdrew five cards from the top of the pack and shoved them toward her. She picked them up, looked at them, and laughed outright.

"What's in the pot?" she demanded to know.

"A great deal," said the woman, with a sort of mournful tenseness ringing in her tone; "it comes in all to a marriage."

"That's worth while," said the girl; then she held her cards as a shield before her face, and whispered behind them to the woman, "He will have a lot of money, you know."

The woman looked at her sadly, and then looked sadly at the man. The latter was looking at the girl.

"You must ante," he reminded her.

"My girlhood," she said, pushing it forward as she spoke; "and I bet my innocence," she added.

"You understand, do you not," said the woman, "that we are playing for real things? Real love, real dishonor, real despair. That is a real present and future that lie before you. That is a real hope—a real devotion."

The girl flushed. "And are not my girlhood and innocence real, too?" she cried angrily.

The man threw a diamond solitaire upon the table.

"I call!" he exclaimed as he did so. At the same instant he spread out his cards, face up. He had a full house.

Without waiting for her turn, the girl at once spread out her hand also. She had four queens.

The woman arose—quite pale she was—crossed the room, flung her cards full into the blaze of a fire which

burned there, and went out by a door that led toward the east. As she did so, all that she had staked vanished into thin air.

The man never noticed, for he had turned to the girl and caught one of her hands, and the diamond solitaire glittered forthwith upon its third finger. Neither noticed that as he held her hand her stakes vanished also.

But presently he did wonder what the woman had had, and so he picked up the remaining cards and quickly counted out the five that were missing.

"By George, a royal flush!" he cried then.

The girl had taken up the box containing "all that came to a marriage," and was about to depart.

"She evidently did not care much about winning," she said carelessly, and walked away, leaving him sitting alone.

"The devil she didn't," he swore under his breath, and then suddenly he started, and stared blankly at what lay before him.

The woman had gone, and her stakes of hope, devotion, love, and love in the present and for the future, had disappeared with her.

The girl had gone, her stakes of girlhood and innocence had gone, and she had worn away the solitaire and carried off the marriage.

All that was left were his own stakes—and they seemed trebled by the double desertion of his fellow-gamblers.

He threw back his head and laughed aloud.

"So much for playing with women," he cried, and the vaulted blue above him echoed:

"So much for playing with women."



THE HAPPY FAMILY

MR. SCRAPPINGTON (*doggedly*)—There is no use in your arguing with me!
MRS. SCRAPPINGTON (*conclusively*)—I am not arguing with you—I am telling you!

AFFINITIES

By George Bishop

HE had proposed and she had accepted him, whereupon there had ensued the usual prolonged but gentle cross-examinations which are a feature of suits tried in the Court of Cupid.

Suddenly he remembered a question that he had overlooked—a question so important that he could not understand how he had forgotten to ask it before.

"There is something else," he said tenderly, "that I should like to know. What was there about me that first caused you to—er—care for me?"

She drew away from him slightly, in order to have room to speak. "It was your soul, dear," she answered.

He seemed slightly disappointed.

"The very first time I met you," she continued, in a low, thrilling voice, "something told me that you were different from all the other men I had ever known."

He made an almost invisible gesture of deprecation.

"Oh, so different," she insisted. "But at first I did not realize what it was. Then it flashed across me and I remembered. You see, years ago, when I was very young and very foolish, I cherished an implicit belief in the doctrine of Affinities; I liked to think that every human soul had a twin soul—but only one, of course—created for it in the beginning of all things; and that however separated by distance or by circumstances, the two were always seeking one another, though perhaps unconsciously, and in the end were bound to meet and recognize each other. It was a pretty idea, and for years I reveled in it, but as I

grew older and experienced the disillusionments and the heart-burnings that life has in store for idealists, I lost faith in my childish fancy, and became cold and cynical and bitter."

"How absurd!" he exclaimed. "You talk as if you were a hundred years old, and you're not twenty-two yet."

"That is so," she conceded, "but to the thoughtful and impressionable, life is not measured by years. I am ever so much older than my age—and much older than you are," she added, regarding him with maternal tenderness. "No, not now, please. Let me finish. As I was saying, I grew hard and cynical, and lost faith in everything, and then, in my desire to solve the riddle of existence, I went to the Oriental philosophers. I became interested in various Eastern religions and schools of thought, and finally got hold of some translations of Kandar. Did you ever read Kandar?"

"Never heard of him."

"He is wonderful. His work on 'Soul Relationships' is simply fascinating. I had never read anything like it before. It converted me again to my old belief in twin-souls, and I was happy once more in the conviction that some day I should meet my affinity. And the day I first saw you I knew that that had happened, and that you were the one for whom I had been waiting so long. A voice within me whispered that you were my soul-mate, that we had been intended for each other from the beginning, and that Fate had brought us together at last."

She stopped; he regarded her with awestruck admiration.

"And now, dearest," she resumed,

"tell me what it was that first attracted you to me."

She looked at him expectantly, as he searched his memory.

"I think," he said at length, with a tender smile and a reminiscent light in his eyes, "I think it was the dimple in your elbow."



THE EMPIRE CITY

By George Sylvester Viereck

HUGE steel-ribbed monsters rise into the air,
 Her Babylonian towers, while on high
 Like gilt-scaled serpents glide the swift
 trains by,
 Or underfoot creep to their secret lair.
 A thousand lights are jewels in her hair,
 The sea her girdle and her crown the sky;
 Her veins abound, the fevered pulses fly;
 Immense, defiant, breathless she stands there.

And ever listens in the ceaseless din
 Waiting for him, her lover who shall come,
 Whose singing lips shall boldly claim their own
 And render sonant what in her was dumb,
 The splendor and the madness and the sin,
 Her dreams in iron and her thoughts of stone.



WELL MATED

BESS—It is said that a girl with simple tastes is more likely to capture a husband.

JESS—Certainly. It's only the simple fellows who marry.



EXPERT OPINION

DOLLY—What makes you think she is such an awful gossip?
 MADGE—She told me all the things I asked her about.